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He gave that a thumbs-up?

Metro pays tribute to the late, great film critic Roger Ebert's more unorthodox film choices PAGE 21

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Some of the finest items for your home are made right here in Canada PAGE 24

SHE'S FEELING ALRIGHT

HERALDED AS THIS GENERATION'S NINA SIMONE, BRITISH SINGER-SONGWRITER LAURA MVULA IS SET TO BREAK OUT. SHE SITS DOWN TO TALK TO METRO ABOUT HER PERSONAL STYLE, FROM BIG HEELS TO HER DESIGNER CRUSH PAGE 23

Tim Bachman, a former member of the rock group Bachman-Turner Overdrive, leaves the B.C. provincial courthouse in Chilliwack on Monday. Bachman is charged with sexual assault and sexual interference of a person under 14.

ERIC DREGER/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rocker accused of relationship with young girl

Testimony. Court hears Tim Bachman sexually abused foster child starting when she was 11 years old

A co-founder of iconic Canadian rock band Bachman-Turner Overdrive had a sexual relationship with a girl when she was 11 to 14 years old, a B.C. judge was told this week.

"I felt the relationship was very sick," Stacy Bohun, 24, recalled during testimony in B.C. Supreme Court, where Tim Bachman, 59, is on trial for sexual assault, sexual interference of a person under 14 and sexual touching of a young person.

"He would get me to sit on his lap and kiss him," she added. "One time he tried to French kiss me.... It was just a lot of weird, inappropriate things."

A ban on publication was imposed in 2010 on the name of Bachman to shield the identity of the complainant. But the bans on both Bachman and Bohun were lifted Wednesday by Justice Neill Brown.

The request was for the ban to be lifted on Bachman's name, but Bohun told the judge she didn't mind being publicly identified.

"I'm not afraid," Bohun said in an interview outside court after the judge's ruling. "I want people to know it's OK to talk about it."

She said children cannot provide consent to have a sexual relationship with an adult.

"It took me a long time to realize that," Bohun said.

At the time of the alleged sexual abuse, from 2000 to 2004, Bohun was a foster child living in Bachman's home in the Fraser Valley.

She finally ended their four-year sexual relationship when she ran away from the Bachman home, she said.

She blamed herself for allowing it to happen and started taking drugs to help kill the painful memories, she testified.

Bohun went to police in 2009, she said. Bachman was charged in 2010.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"I just remember being fed up and not being able to take it anymore."

Stacy Bohun on why she ran away from Tim Bachman's Fraser Valley home

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Sentencing. Man who gunned down teen gets life

Harry Randhawa's eyes welled with tears as he spoke of his murdered teenage cousin moments after her killer was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for 16 years.

"We're happy with the judge's decision, as far as happiness can go. There's no joy in this for us," Randhawa said. "Over 14 years, we've gone through tremendous suffering."

The sentence, handed down in B.C. Supreme Court on Wednesday, wraps up 14 years of investigations and court proceedings in the quest to put 18-year-old Poonam Randhawa's ex-boyfriend behind bars.

Randhawa's killer, 35-year-old Ninderjit Singh, stood with eyes fixed on the ground as the judge read his sentence.

In his ruling, B.C. Supreme Court Justice Bruce Butler said Singh continually put his own interests above those of the victim's family and prolonged their fear and suffering, a key reason why he did not follow the defence recommendation that Singh be eligible for parole after 10 years.

Butler said Singh displayed few true signs of remorse or rehabilitation, considering he spent 12 years attempting to evade police and continued to bully the women in his life.

There were no signs of emotion from Singh, however, who court heard last month shot Randhawa in 1999 at point-blank range with an illegal semi-automatic handgun in the back of a friend's car.

The then-21-year-old dumped Randhawa's body in a pile of shattered glass in a Vancouver alleyway, before disappearing across the border to the United States.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Premier Christy Clark has been cleared of conflict-of-interest allegations in connection to the Liberal government's decision to privatize BC Rail in 2003.
DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Premier cleared of conflict of interest

BC Rail. Report clears Clark of allegations, but MP says it raises more issues about government spending

With just days to go until the provincial election campaign officially starts, Premier Christy Clark has been cleared of conflict-of-interest allegations made by an independent MLA.

John van Dongen, a former Liberal cabinet minister, claimed Clark was in conflict by recusing herself from some cabinet meetings where the issue of BC Rail's privatization was discussed, but not all of the meetings.

Clark's husband had a business connection to some of the players involved in the sale.

After the decision was released on Wednesday, Clark said she didn't expect van Dongen to apologize.

"I always knew the things that he was saying weren't true," she told reporters.

Van Dongen not only wasn't willing to apologize; he even vowed to continue his quest, saying the report raises even more issues in the sale of the railway.

The 40-page report, written by Saskatchewan lawyer Gerald Gerrand for the Office of Conflict of Interest Commissioner, ruled Clark was not in a conflict of interest on the file.

Gerrand added that van Dongen failed to identify in his complaint how Clark would have benefited.

"It is not the statutory function of the commission to engage in a roving inquisition to ascertain if facts exist to support an innuendo or series of innuendoes, absent a reasonably supported factual assertion of a breach of a specific provision or provisions of the Act," he wrote.

Under the law, a complainant must base a complaint on reasonable grounds or risk being censured by the legislature, he said.

Gerrand said he based his conclusions on interviews taken under oath, written correspondences and redacted cabinet-meeting minutes that displayed only those issues related to the privatization of BC Rail.

Van Dongen said he plans to do a more detailed review of the report, and said it raises even more issues about the government's decision to pay $6 million in legal fees for Dave Basi and Bobby Virk, two former government workers convicted of breach of trust in the railway's sale.

"For people to say this deals with the BC Rail issues and clears the air completely is really a misrepresentation of the report," he said. "It's a narrow set of issues under the Conflict of Interest Act."

Clark disagreed, saying van Dongen has had his day in the sun.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

No reasonable grounds

"For me it's proof that anybody can say anything and it doesn't have to be true for it to be hurtful and ... for it to be reported again and again and again."
B.C. Premier Christy Clark

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Teaming up to help hoarders

Vancouver Hoarding Action Response Team. New approach includes property inspector, mental-health workers

EMILY JACKSON
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Captain Doug Booth doesn't want to fine compulsive hoarders for fire violations, but he can't let people live unsafely with a mountain of possessions blocking all the hallways and fire exits.

"I'll be the first one to say I realize this is a huge intrusion into your life, but I can't ignore your situation. We're going to have to work with you one way or another,'" the fire inspector said, noting that extreme clutter boosts fire and structural risks, not to mention the threat of eviction.

Along with a property-use inspector and two Vancouver Coastal Health mental-health workers, Booth is part of the unique Vancouver Hoarding Action Response Team that UBC researchers say is "setting the standard" for tackling hoarding.

One living space was so jammed that firefighters had to use a shovel to get to the person, according to a presentation the team made to city council on Wednesday. Hoarding becomes especially hazardous in multi-unit buildings where fires, leaks or pests can directly affect neighbours.

Since the hoarding team officially started its pilot project in May 2012, it has dealt with more than 200 cases.

The project, which started partly in response to an October 2011 fire that killed a man when rescuers couldn't get into a heavily hoarded house to save him, has successfully helped 90 people live in safe spaces.

Teaming up with health workers has made an incredible difference in preventing evictions and getting people the help they need to stop hoarding, he said. Older men tend to hoard most in Vancouver, he added, and every socio-economic level is affected.

In Oct. 2011, a fire destroyed this Vancouver house and killed its occupant. Fire crews couldn't rescue the man because all doors and windows were blocked with hoarded goods. HOARDING ACTION RESPONSE TEAM/CONTRIBUTED

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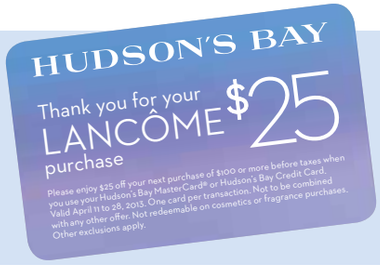
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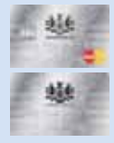

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City expects organic food waste to double

Holy Scraps. Vancouver expects the amount of the fresh-smelling compost to rise to 50,000 tonnes per year

EMILY JACKSON
Metro in Vancouver

As more Vancouverites toss food scraps into green bins, not the garbage, the city needs a new home for the fresh-smelling compost that skips the landfill.

The city plans to build a new organic-waste transfer facility to manage the extra food waste, expected to nearly double to up to 50,000 tonnes of organic waste per year, according to a request for architectural and engineering services posted this week.

Organics

26,000

At the much-hyped MC2 condo projects at SW Marine Drive and Cambie, the city already processes 26,000 tonnes of organics at the Vancouver South Transfer Station.

And it hopes whoever builds it keeps the smell down.

"Odour management will be a critical design consideration, as the site is in close proximity to other uses including developing residential," according to the request.

The city is preparing to deal with almost double the amount of kitchen scraps and compost at its South Vancouver transfer facility. COURTESY OF HARVEST POWER

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RCMP. B.C. officers won't be charged for killing man with extensive hit list

Officers will not be charged in a fatal police shootout involving a B.C. man who had a long hit list and is suspected of shooting three people in Metro Vancouver.

The incident involving 26-year-old Angus Mitchell came after Burnaby Mounties issued a warning about the man, who was the suspect in a double murder in a restaurant and the attempted murder of his landlord last year.

Hours after the police warning was issued, a Maple Ridge, B.C., woman recognized the description of Mitchell's van and called 911.

Police surrounded Mitchell's van and he opened fire before being fatally shot by an officer.

Vancouver police took over the investigation after the shooting, looking into whether the officers involved in the incident were right to use deadly force.

The department's Const. Brian Montague said investigators used a video of the incident filmed from a police helicopter that showed Mitchell opening fire on police before he was shot in return.

"Our investigation showed that there is no evidence to support that there was any wrongdoing on the part of the officers," said Montague.

"There are no charges that will be recommended to the Crown."

After Mitchell's death, RCMP revealed the man had a hit list targeting people, businesses and institutions in the Lower Mainland.

The list had detailed and methodically thought-out plans that included escape and attack routes for each target — among his targets were two schools, a group home, a coffee house and a gym.

Mitchell is suspected of killing Huong Tran and Chinh Diem Huyhm, who were found dead in a Burnaby sushi restaurant on May 27, 2012.

Two days later, Mitchell's landlord was shot and badly wounded.

A coroner's inquest around the incident will be held Nov. 5.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Kidnapping

Texts, GPS help Mounties rescue woman taken by her boyfriend

The RCMP says cellphone texts and GPS co-ordinates helped them rescue a woman who said she'd been kidnapped by her boyfriend and was being held in his transport truck in central B.C.

The victim began texting a friend on Monday saying her boyfriend had become violent. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mounties involved

Police watchdog looking into Quesnel incident

B.C.'s police watchdog is looking into an incident involving Mounties in Quesnel going back to Feb. 28.

However, there are few details about exactly what the Independent Investigations Office is investigating. A news release says no more information will be released because of the sensitive nature of the probe. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sikh daggers to be allowed in B.C. courts

Kirpan. Similar policies have already been introduced in Alberta and Toronto

Sikhs will soon be able to wear their ceremonial daggers in British Columbia courthouses as long they can prove to a sheriff they observe the religion's other tenets.

"It gives us religious satisfaction that we won't have to take off (the kirpan) when we go into the courts," said Harminder Singh, the head priest of the Ross Street Temple in Vancouver.

Anyone wanting to wear the kirpan — a symbol of religious significance to a sect of Sikhs — must inform the court sheriff they are wearing one that meets the 19-centimetre size limit and must also be wearing a turban and the ceremonial iron bracelet.

"Previously we felt discriminated (against)," Singh said.

"Others are allowed to keep (their) religious symbols," he said, drawing an imaginary cross on his chest with his finger. "Now we are allowed to keep ours."

The B.C. government says the change will be effective Friday and is in keeping with policies introduced in Alberta and Toronto courthouses over the past year.

"It's part of someone's religious obligation," said Premier Christy Clark.

"You shouldn't have to make a choice between your religious obligation and your ability to participate in our democratic process," she said.

Sohan Singh Deo, president of the Khalsa Diwan Society, said he doesn't think the move was politically motivated, even though a B.C. Liberal campaign strategy leaked last month detailed ways the struggling party could gain "quick wins" in ethnic communities ahead of the May election.

"I don' think these things will affect (the election) much," Deo said, adding that the B.C. NDP have also supported the plan. Deo said there aren't many Sikhs in B.C. who wear a kirpan, but the policy change is important nonetheless.

TYLER HARBOTTLE/THE CANADIAN PRESS, EXCLUSIVELY FOR METRO

Sohan Singh Deo outside the Ross street Sikh temple in Vancouver on Wednesday. ERIC DREGER/CANADIAN PRESS

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Girl wins lawsuit against boy for recess injury

A girl has won her liability lawsuit against a boy for an injury she received at a private elementary school in Surrey during recess in 2008.

The girl was 11 and her schoolmate was 12 at the time.

Jacqueline Gu was being carried "piggyback-style" by her friend Elizabeth when Elizabeth was pushed from behind by a friend and classmate, Liam Friesen. Jacqueline, who described Liam as a nice boy, fell and fractured her elbow on the artificial turf at Southridge School.

Elizabeth's mother described Liam as "rambunctious, but a sweet kid."

Jacqueline advanced the legal action through her legal guardian, Bei Xin Gu, since children cannot file lawsuits.

She claimed negligence against Friesen, his parents, Elizabeth, Elizabeth's parents and the school. Jacqueline alleged the school did not properly supervise the playground when she was injured.

In a judgment released Wednesday, B.C. Supreme Court Justice Terry Schultes found Liam Friesen was negligently liable for the injury.

But the judge dismissed the liability claim against the parents, the school and the third parties. He did not determine how much Liam, now a teenager, would have to pay in damages, leaving that decision until after a further hearing.

Six lawyers were involved in the five-day civil trial.

Friesen testified he had been playing football when he noticed the two girls, whom he was friends with at the time.

He recalled that he ran "pretty far" from the game before he saw Elizabeth and Jacqueline because he was trying to catch a pass for a touchdown. When he stopped, they were between five and 10 metres away from him.

He ran up behind them at pace "between a walk and a run" and pushed Elizabeth "softly," the boy said. But he agreed on cross-examination that he was going at a "fast jog" and that it was more his momentum that accounted for the amount of force applied.

His intention was to make the girls laugh. He did not mean to hurt Jacqueline, he said.

NEAL HALL/THE CANADIAN PRESS , EXCLUSIVELY FOR METRO

New to Canada? Work these seven job-hunting tips

MOSAIC Job Fair. Event co-ordinator offers this advice for immigrants

KATE WEBB
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It can be tough for anyone to find a job in Vancouver, much less an immigrant facing language or other barriers. But nearly 30 employers — from four-star hotels to casinos, medical labs to banks — will meet with thousands of them at the second-annual MOSAIC Job Fair next Thursday.

Christian Saint Cyr, publisher of the BC Labour Market Report and co-ordinator of the MOSAIC Job Fair, offers these seven tips for immigrant job searchers:

1. Know what you want. Peppering the town with resumés sends the message you are desperate. Even if you are, no one wants to hire someone in that state. Instead, decide what kind of company you want to work for and what kind of job you want to do, and then methodically research who does the hiring for those positions.

2. Brush up on soft skills. Many employers in Asia, Africa and eastern Europe focus primarily on technical skills, but in Canada, soft skills, such as effective communication, networking and the ability to present ideas, are just as important. Familiarize yourself with the culture by attending presentations, clubs and networking events in your community.

3. Go in person. These days, most people apply for jobs online, so going in personally to hand in your resumé will help you stand out from the crowd. Always dress professionally.

4. Ask for a short informational interview. If you ask a hiring manager for an hour-long informational interview they will probably turn you down. But almost anybody can spare five or 10 minutes. Ask what they look for in a candidate, both in terms of skills and attitude.

5. Play the odds. Research cited in Forbes magazine suggests 46 per cent of new hires fail within the first 18 months. One strategy is to go through job ads that ran two to three months ago and follow up with employers by asking for an informational interview. At the very least, you can learn about the kind of candidate they hired. At best, if whoever they hired didn't work out they might consider hiring you rather than going through the hiring process again.

6. Think local. Punch your postal code into the proximity search tool of an online phone book along with the type of business you want to work for to identify potential employers in your area. Living close to work could be a bonus for you and give you a leg up in landing the job.

7. Practice makes perfect. Never give up on looking for work because of the language barrier. Improve your English by taking classes, watching TV, listening to the radio, reading books and practising as much as possible.

Polish off your resumé

- The MOSAIC Job Fair runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on April 18 at the Croatian Cultural Centre (3250 Commercial Dr.). Admission and parking are free, and the fair is open to anyone in Metro Vancouver who is seeking work. For more information, go to mosaicjobfair.com.

About 2,000 newcomers to Canada turned out for last year's MOSAIC Job Fair. COURTESY OF MOSAIC

Consultant created bogus jobs in immigration scam, CBSA alleges

The Canada Border Services Agency is investigating an alleged immigration scam in Vancouver that involved out-of-country employees paying their own salaries so they could maintain their Canadian residency status and qualify for tax benefits.

The alleged scam was revealed in a court ruling released on Tuesday. The Canada Revenue Agency went to court seeking documents seized last year by the CBSA during raids of immigration consultant Xun Wang and two company offices in Vancouver and Richmond.

The court noted that, under the alleged scheme, one of Wang's corporations would "hire" a client, allowing the client to be classified as an employee of a Canadian company who worked outside Canada.

If this was accepted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the client would maintain permanent resident status without living in Canada for two of the past five years, as required, because employment by a Canadian corporation outside of Canada also counts toward the two-year requirement.

It is alleged the client would pay money to Wang's corporations, which would use the money to pay the client's "salary."

The court documents say one of Wang's corporations, acting as employer, allegedly would withhold source deductions — federal and provincial income taxes, employment insurance and Canada Pension — and the client would receive a "paycheque."

The corporation allegedly would remit the source deductions to the CRA and issue T4 slips to the clients at the end of the year.

Clients would be paid between $14,000 and $30,000 a year, low enough to enable the taxpayer to receive a refund of most or all of the taxes remitted by the corporate employer.

In the court documents, the CRA also alleged the employees "may also be paid benefits such as working income tax benefit, GST credits, child credits, universal child care benefit and climate action rebates."

The allegations have not been proven in court.

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Animal cruelty. Owner of Captain the dog pleads guilty to lethal beating

The owner of a dog named Captain pleaded guilty to animal-cruelty charges after his two-year-old German shepherd was found beaten in a Kitsilano dumpster last summer.

Brian Whitlock, 26, is expected to be sentenced in June and could face up to five years in jail, a $75,000 fine and a lifetime ban on pet ownership.

Captain was found wrapped in a bloody blanket, suffering from massive injuries, after neighbours heard his cries and called the B.C. SPCA in July. It died the next day.

While animal lovers expressed relief at the charges laid in December, the Vancouver Humane Society (VHS) is concerned that the owner won't receive what they consider an appropriate sentence.

"We think jail time is warranted in this case, as it involved severe and prolonged suffering for Captain," VHS spokesman Peter Fricker said in an email. "The Crown needs to send a strong message to the public that it takes animal cruelty seriously."

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

Captain the dog, a German shepherd, died after being found in a Kitsilano dumpster last summer. B.C. SPCA/CONTRIBUTED

Commuters swapping cars for buses since tolls began

Port Mann Bridge.
Rapid-bus service a big success, may launch in Surrey in the future

KATE WEBB
kate.webb@metronews.ca

Avoiding the new Port Mann Bridge isn't the only way commuters south of the Fraser River are dodging tolls.

Rapid-bus ridership climbed from 23,000 in December to 38,000 last month, while the new bridge has seen an average of 200,000 fewer vehicle trips per month since the buses launched than it did during the same period the year before.

"When you're paying your bus fare, you're not paying for parking, you're not paying for gas, you're not paying for insurance," said TransLink spokesman Derek Zabel.

The Port Mann bridge saw an average of 200,000 fewer vehicle trips per month after it opened than it did during the same period the year before. TREO/CONTRIBUTED

"Taking transit is a cost-effective way for a lot of people to commute.... When the bus first came out, you were seeing close to the bus being half full, and now you're seeing almost full-seated loads in the peak direction."

The buses, which launched in December after the bridge opened, run every 15 minutes from Langley during peak hours and drop people off in Coquitlam and Burnaby, where they can easily catch the SkyTrain into Vancouver.

Zabel said TransLink is working on bringing the rapid-bus service to Surrey as well, but could not say when that might happen.

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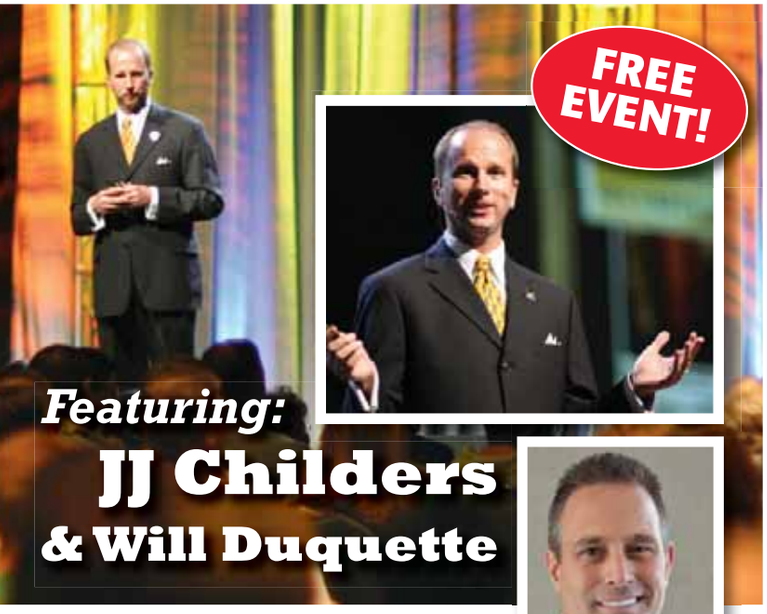

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A woman in July 2011 at the grave of one of many newly identified victims of the 1995 massacre in Srebrenica during the Bosnian war. SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Canada boycotts UN justice meeting

War crimes. Ambassadors protest Bosnian victim being thrown out of meeting

Canada, the United States and Jordan boycotted a meeting on international criminal justice organized by the Serbian president of the General Assembly on Wednesday, offended that it didn't include Bosnia's war victims, and attacked the UN war-crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

To protest the victims' exclusion, the UN ambassadors from Jordan and Liechtenstein hosted a press conference for two victims groups — the Mothers of Srebrenica and the Association of Witnesses and Survivors of Genocide — while assembly president Vuk Jeremic, the former foreign minister of Serbia, presided over the assembly meeting.

Munira Subasic, president of the Mothers of Srebrenica, who lost 22 close family members in the 1995 massacre by Bosnian Serbs, said she was allowed into the assembly meeting as "a silent observer." She listened as Serbia's ultra-nationalist President Tomislav Nikolic criticized the Yugoslav tribunal.

She believed that Nikolic was denying the genocide in Srebrenica, so she said she put on a T-shirt she had brought as a gift for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, which said: "Justice Is Slow But It's Reachable."

"All of a sudden I was surrounded by security of Vuk Jeremic" and escorted out of the conference room, Subasic said.

In a lengthy speech soon after, Serbia's Nikolic protested against the "lynch-mobbing of Serbia" and accused the Yugoslav tribunal of "selective justice" by seeking to punish Serbs while overlooking the crimes of Bosnians and Croats.

Aware of the controversy, Ban gave his "full and unequivocal support" to all international tribunals in an opening speech. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Syria. United States may send bigger military aid package to rebel forces

The Obama administration is expected to give Syrian rebels broader nonlethal assistance, including body armour and night-vision goggles, while stopping short of providing weapons to help fight Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The timing and scope of the stepped-up aid package is unclear. U.S. President Barack Obama has not given final approval, and an announcement is not imminent, according to a senior administration official, who requested anonymity.

Secretary of State John Kerry, who met with Syrian opposition leaders on Wednesday, hinted this week at quick action, saying broader assistance for the rebels has been "front and centre" in recent discussions.

Obama has resisted pressure to arm the rebels; underscoring that concern, the leader of the most formidable rebel group in Syria pledged allegiance on Wednesday to al-Qaida. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prolonged conflict

With Syria's civil war in its third year, the U.S. and its allies are struggling to find ways to stem the violence that, according to the United Nations, has killed more than 70,000 people.

Sexsomnia

Man acquitted of sleep sex assault

A Danish man has been acquitted of molesting two 17-year-old girls after he was found to suffer from a rare sleep disorder known as "sexsomnia."

The Glostrup court said Wednesday that the man fondled the teenagers while sleeping in his suburban Copenhagen apartment after a party in 2011. But the court cleared the 31-year-old, saying medical tests show he suffers from "sexsomnia," in which a person engages in sexual activity while asleep.

Michael Laub, a Danish sleep specialist who wasn't involved in the case, said it's a rare but widely recognized sleep disorder.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Is Canada failing its children?

Nation ranks 17th out of 29 wealthy countries when it comes to the well-being of our children, according to a new study from UNICEF, the United Nations children's agency.

THE CANADIAN PRESS
Photos: Torstar News Service/Getty Images/The Canadian Press File

Ranking 'isn't good enough': UNICEF Canada

UNICEF graded the 29 countries in five categories and Canada's best ranking was 11th in the area of housing and environment. David Morley, UNICEF Canada's president and CEO, says the report shows there's a lot of work to be done.
"The fact that our children rank in the bottom half when compared to other industrialized nations simply isn't good enough," Morley said.

Youth smoking pot, not smokes

Canada scored third-best on smoking, with UNICEF saying only four per cent of children aged 11, 13 and 15 reported smoking at least once a week.

The same can't be said for cannabis, with Canada sitting 29th and last with 28 per cent of children saying they have used cannabis within the past year.

Bullying still a major concern

Canada ranked 21st in bullying, with 35 per cent of children aged 11, 13 and 15 reporting being bullied at school at least once in the past couple of months.

More than 1 in 5 have bloated BMI

When it comes to obesity, Canada is third from the bottom, with 20.24 per cent of children aged 11, 13 and 15 deemed overweight based on the body mass index.

A substandard well-being

Canada ranked 14th in educational well-being, 15th in material well-being, 16th in behaviour and risks and a low 27th in health and safety. "It is clear Canada can do better," Morley said. "Protecting and promoting the well-being of our children must become a national priority."

Dutch top list as Canada plummets

The Netherlands remains the overall leader in the study and is the only country ranked among the top five in all dimensions of child well-being.

Meanwhile, Canada's overall ranking drops seven places to 24th when children's views of their own life satisfaction are measured. Only five eastern European countries rank lower than Canada in this category.

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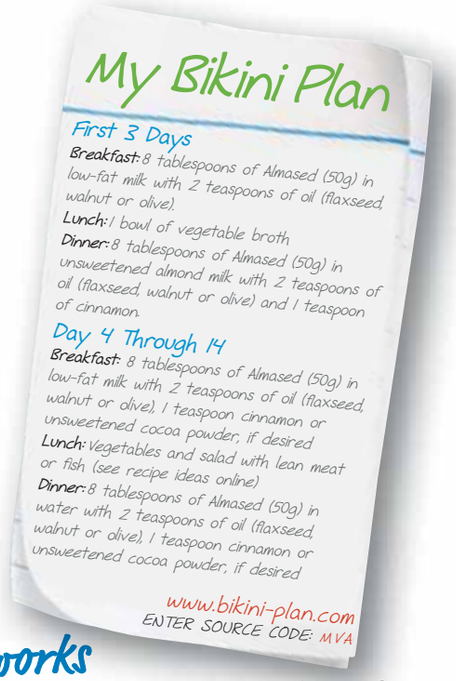
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Docs often not told of side-effects by drug reps: Study

Public health concern. Minimum standard for drug safety info met in less than 2% of company sales calls

A new study suggests doctors aren't always told of harmful effects by drug sellers. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Most family doctors say they receive little or no information about harmful effects of medications when visited by drug-company sales representatives promoting their products, a survey of Canadian, U.S. and French physicians has found.

Even so, many doctors said they were likely to start prescribing or increase prescriptions of promoted drugs following sales-rep visits, consistent with previous research that shows prescribing behaviour is influenced by pharmaceutical companies' promotion.

"Harm from medication use is a serious public-health concern," said Barbara Mintzes, principal researcher of the survey study. "So the information quality, and doctors getting complete information on medicines, is important."

For the study, published online Wednesday in the Journal of General Internal Medicine, the researchers asked 255 family doctors in Montreal, Vancouver, Sacramento and Toulouse, France, to fill out a questionnaire each time they were visited by a drug-company rep.

In all, the physicians provided information on almost 1,700 drug promotions between May 2009 and June 2010.

Pharmaceutical sales reps regularly visit doctors' offices to promote their products, providing information, often free samples and, in some cases, food and invitations to events. Since 2005, France has prohibited free drug samples and gifts to doctors.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Bullied teen. Family of Rehtaeh Parsons says they were failed by system

The family of a 17-year-old girl that has gone public about her suicide after months of bullying say they were thwarted at practically every turn when they tried to get help for the troubled teen.

Jason Barnes, the longtime boyfriend of Rehtaeh Parsons' mother, said a sad string of failures ultimately led to the girl's death more than a year after she was allegedly sexually assaulted by four boys.

"No matter where her mother turned to try to get help for her, no matter where Rehtaeh tried to turn to get help, all she had was her family," Barnes said on Wednesday.

"The justice system failed us completely. The education system didn't seem to do much of anything."

The RCMP say they investigated the sexual-assault allegations after consulting with the province's Public Prosecution Service but concluded there weren't enough grounds to lay charges.

"She was very upset, very devastated from that," Barnes said.

The Halifax Regional School Board says it took a hands-off approach in the alleged assault of Rehtaeh Parsons, not wanting to interfere with the RCMP. FACEBOOK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Earlier in the day, Rehtaeh's family met with Nova Scotia Justice Minister Ross Landry after he announced Tuesday night that his department was looking for ways to review how the RCMP handled the allegations. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Jobs

Survey shows skilled labour gap

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association released an internal survey of members showing half reporting difficulty finding qualified workers, and expecting the problem to worsen in the next five years. An organization official says shortages are widespread but particularly acute in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Birth-control recall

Gynecology group warns Alysena 28 users

Women who may have taken birth-control pills from faulty packs should use a backup form of contraception, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada said on Wednesday. Women may also need to talk to their doctors about taking a pregnancy test. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Putin mistakenly banned from Finland

Finished with the Finnish? Interior minister offers the Russian president her 'sincerest apologies'

Vladimir Putin, banned in Finland?

Finnish police say the Russian president's name was mistakenly placed on a secret criminal register that could theoretically have gotten him arrested at the border.

It was reported Wednesday that Putin was placed there due to his contact with the Russian motorcycle gang Night Wolves, though he wasn't suspected of a crime in Finland.

But National Police Board spokesman Robin Lardot said the listing was a mistake and that Putin's name was removed from the list.

"The National Police Board has investigated the case and indeed found that such a mistaken entry was in the register," Lardot said.

"We have ordered it to be removed and are investigating the case very thoroughly. We don't know how it got there."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"This kind of incident is extremely exceptional and is not acceptable under any circumstances."

Mikko Paatero, head of Finland's national police force

Vladimir Putin plays with his dogs Yume and Buffy in the Moscow region on March 24. ALEXEI DRUZHININ/RIA NOVOSTI/PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SERVICE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Unusual target

Circus elephant survives drive-by shooting injury

Authorities say a Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus elephant was hit by a bullet in a drive-by shooting in Tupelo, Miss.

Circus spokeswoman Melinda Hartline says the elephant, named Carol, was not seriously hurt, and no other animals were harmed.

Police Chief Tony Carleton says a vehicle drove past the arena at about 2 a.m. and fired into the area. Police are investigating.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'One of the worst things I've seen.' Puppy tied to train tracks in California

Officials say a 78-year-old man tied a puppy to train tracks in the California desert, and an engineer had to use emergency brakes to keep from crushing it.

Riverside County animal control said Tuesday that Banjo, a 10-month-old poodle-terrier mix, is fine and up for adoption.

The train was near Mecca, Calif., on April 2 when the engineer saw a man walking away from the tracks and stopped.

Union Pacific Special Agent Sal Pina responded and called the scene "one of the worst things I've seen."

Pina untied Banjo and detained the man, who said his family didn't want the dog and didn't know what to do.

Pina says he couldn't pursue charges against the man because he appeared confused and didn't understand what he'd done.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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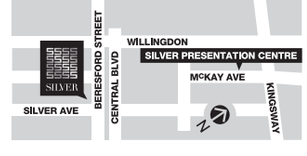

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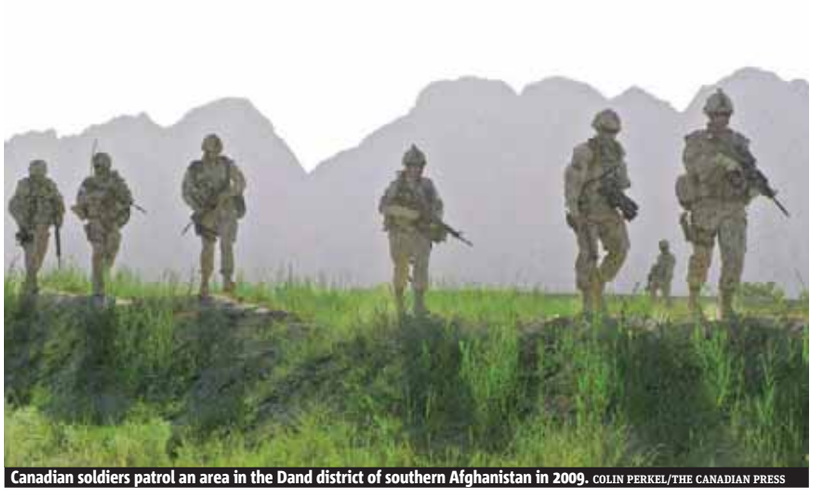
Plan to cut danger pay for troops under review

Afghanistan. Canadian soldiers facing 30% cut because bureaucrats feel Kabul is safer than the volatile south



Canadian soldiers patrol an area in the Dand district of southern Afghanistan in 2009. COLIN PERKEL/THE CANADIAN PRESS

A plan by bureaucrats to reduce danger pay for Canadian troops serving in Afghanistan is now under review by the Harper government.

"This decision was not appropriate, and we are asking for this decision to be reviewed," said Veterans Affairs Minister Steven Blaney.

The stipend was reportedly facing a cut of more than 30 per cent, which would have meant nearly $500 a month less for roughly 920 soldiers based in Kabul, who are training Afghan forces.

The rationale for the initial decision, which was made by a joint committee of bureaucrats from National Defence and Treasury Board, was that Kabul is safer than Afghanistan's volatile south, where Canadian soldiers are no longer serving.

In an exercise in damage control, officials from the prime minister's office, called Wednesday for the committee, which meets only four times a year, to convene again "as soon as possible" to reverse the decision. It's unclear when the committee will meet.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Legal. Muslim inmates in high-security prison fight for right to pray together

Lawyers for American Taliban fighter John Walker Lindh asked a U.S. judge Wednesday to find the Federal Bureau of Prisons in contempt for not allowing Muslim inmates in a high-security prison unit to pray together five times a day, as required by their faith.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana filed the contempt motion in U.S. District Court.

The U.S.-born Lindh first drew attention when he was detained in Afghanistan weeks after the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

The prisons agency has said inmates of all religions housed in the Terre Haute federal prison's Communications Management Unit have been allowed to pray together three times daily after a federal judge ruled in Lindh's favour in a lawsuit seeking the prayer time.

The ACLU of Indiana argues that isn't what the judge's Jan. 11 ruling required.

American Taliban fighter John Walker Lindh wants to pray with Muslim inmates. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The judge said Lindh, 32, sincerely believes Islam mandates Muslims pray together five times a day and federal law requires the prison to accommodate his beliefs.

The ACLU said prayer times set by the prison make only two daily prayers possible or make prayers impossible during proper times.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Alberta Premier Alison Redford speaks to reporters on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday. MANUEL BALCE CENETA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Alberta premier dismisses $40 'magic number'

Carbon tax. Redford's government agrees current $15 levy may need to be raised

Alberta Premier Alison Redford is pouring cold water on reports her government already has a dollar amount in mind for an increase to its carbon levy on industry.

Redford is in Washington talking up Alberta's environmental policies to support the approval of the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline.

The premier has repeatedly stressed Alberta's existing $15-per-tonne carbon tax on large emitters that don't meet a 12 per cent intensity reduction target. Recent leaked reports suggest Alberta could move to a 40 per cent intensity reduction target with penalties of $40 per tonne.

But Redford warned that no one should presume that will be the final target. "I know there have been reports that that's somehow a magic number," she said Wednesday. "In our minds it's not."

Alberta consistently points to its carbon levy as unique in North America, but critics question its effectiveness.

Groups such as the Pembina Institute suggest the levy actually works out to less than a couple of dollars per tonne averaged over an industrial facility's entire carbon output. Companies can also buy carbon offsets, some of which cost as little as $8 a tonne. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Climate change. Canada giving $10M to coalition

The federal government is putting another $10 million into a global coalition to reduce short-lived climate pollutants — substances such as soot, methane and hydrofluorocarbons that emit greenhouse gases.

Environment Minister Peter Kent said Canada would also be putting $2.5 million towards a centre launched by the United Nations to help developing countries find the best technology to confront the challenges of climate change. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"As an Arctic nation, Canada understands the importance of addressing short-lived climate pollutants, which have an impact on the rate of Arctic ice melt."

Environment Minister Peter Kent, at the Canadian embassy in the U.S. capital.

U.S. Supreme Court

'Heart is broken,' says top court's 2nd black justice

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas says he is heartbroken over the poverty and social troubles among many black communities.

Thomas is the second black justice on the top U.S. court. He spoke Tuesday at Duquesne Law School. He said his "heart is broken."

He said he's seen terrible decline in some black communities, and "virtually every crime is drug-related." Thomas said many young people have no families and no education, and numerous anti-poverty programs have failed.

Thomas said the U.S. should "at least fess up and say something is wrong." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York City

Weiner weighing run for mayor

Former U.S. Rep. Anthony Weiner, who resigned over a sexting scandal in 2011, says he's weighing a run for New York City mayor this year.

The Democrat said his political committee spent more than $100,000 on polling and research. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Anthony Weiner
GETTY IMAGES FILE

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Sticky situation

BMO lauded for being nice to mice

BMO is getting an award and a big box of vegan chocolates shaped like mice from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. After learning from PETA about the cruelty of using sticky glue traps to kill mice, BMO banned the devices from its approximately 900 locations nationwide. METRO

Market Minute

DOLLAR
98.58¢
(+0.18¢)

TSX 12,534.91 (+50.85)

OIL $94.64 US (+ 44¢)

GOLD $1,558.80 US (-$27.90)

Natural gas: $4.10 US (+8¢)
Dow Jones: 14,802.24 (+128.78)

Porter Airlines reveals long-haul ambitions

Controversial plan.
Expansion hinges on being allowed to land jets on T.O.'s waterfront

Bob Deluce, left, president and CEO of Porter Airlines, sits with Bombardier's president Mike Arcamone in a Bombardier CS100 aircraft Wednesday. Deluce announced the airline's purchase of 12 of the planes, with an option for a further 18, at a news conference in Toronto. CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Porter Airlines unveiled an ambitious plan to become the third national carrier on Wednesday after signing an agreement to buy a dozen new Bombardier CS100 jets and expand the cities where it flies.

But the company faces several significant hurdles along the way as it seeks to change the rules and extend the runway at the small waterfront airport where it's headquartered in Toronto.

Porter president and chief executive Robert Deluce is he's confident enough that his airline will prevail that he doesn't have a backup plan.

"Our plan is predicated on us being able to get the approvals that we need in order to be able to operate these airplanes," he said after a media event held at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. Jets are not allowed to fly out of Billy Bishop, which is on an island near the city's lakefront, except under special circumstances.

The current rules are part of a tripartite agreement between the City of Toronto, the federal government and the Toronto Port Authority — making it difficult to get quick action from the necessary authorities.

Deluce said the airline plans to fly the jets to destinations such as Vancouver, Los Angeles and Florida that its current fleet of turboprops can't reach. Porter will also seek permission to extend the main runway at the airport by 168 metres at each end. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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NEWS NOT FIT FOR PRINT

HE SAYS

John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

I have a lot of esteemed titles — freelance writer, ex-husband, that guy in Metro — but none bring me more respect than editor-in-chief of Canada's most dignified newspaper, The Beaver Examiner.

Perhaps you've heard of it. With mission statements to "keep fake news real" and "treat every week like shark week," The BeEx has been bringing insightful Canadian news to reader(s) since 2005, updated any time — day or night — once every several months.

As you'll see below, The Beaver Examiner is unencumbered by fact-checking, spelchecking or any of the other quaint traditions that hold back so many newspapers (seven worldwide as of press time). Enjoy and be enlightened!

The Beaver Examiner News Briefs: Proudly Independent From Facts

- Rescuers Say 751,171 People Stranded In New Brunswick NEAR THE N.B. BORDER – Emergency crews are being urgently dispatched to the province of New Brunswick today, after it was discovered that 751,171 people have been stranded there for the entire winter.

Rescuers said they are having a difficult time accessing the area, due to a lack of affordable airfare and fear of becoming stranded themselves.

"We're hoping for the best, but we hear there may be 69,000 people in Moncton alone," said rescue co-ordinator Kerry Chandler, choking back tears.

Chandler said it was the most shocking disaster he and his staff can recall since rescuers stumbled upon several million people crammed into squalid conditions in downtown Toronto.

- Unusually Skilled Witness to Shooting Knew Immediately Gunshots Were Gunshots VANCOUVER – Burnaby resident Tom Mayer, a skilled witness to tragedy and unusually adept innocent passerby, knew immediately that a gunshot he heard while leaving a bar in the Vancouver downtown was a gunshot.

"I heard a 'pop, pop' sound and I thought 'gunshots!' right away," the wise-beyond-his-peers Mayer said. "Definitely not a firecracker, firework, or car backfiring." Mayer said the tragedy that injured four didn't seem at all like an action movie, "because that's kind of stupid."

Mayer said he picked up his witnessing acumen years ago when he saw a Cessna crash that he knew instantly had nothing to do with terrorism.

- Prone Man Criticizes Goaltender's Positioning WINNIPEG – Rick McHutchion, a Manitoba man who had been lying on his back on his couch for almost three hours, expressed disgust at the positioning of Winnipeg Jets goaltender Ondřej Pavelec during Tuesday's game against the Buffalo Sabres.

"He looks terrible out there," said McHutchion, as he fished awkwardly for the final chip in a bag resting on his ample stomach. "He should be embarrassed."

McHutchion added that the Winnipeg defence is lazy, and that he'd change the channel in disgust if the remote wasn't so far away.

And that's a look at the award-wanting news coverage The Beaver Examiner brings every single day that I feel like it.

Check in next week when we'll examine a new survey that shows that nine out of 10 government scientists, when asked about being "muzzled" by the federal government, said "Mphm! Mphm!"

ZOOM

Why take the stairs when ...

SOLENT NEWS AND PHOTO AGENCY

... sliding into the office is a breeze

British IT company Peer 1 Hosting has unleashed the most enjoyable office ever. Their design makeover came complete with cinema, pub, pool table, golf course, tree house and giant helter-skelter slide. METRO

Other fun offices

- **Google:** Zurich. It's fitting that the tech giants put effort into their office. There is a rule to be never more than 100 metres from food, while an aquarium and library provide relaxation.
- **Comvert:** Milan. The clothing company has an indoor skating rink suspended above their desks to blow off steam.
- **DTAC:** Bangkok. Mobile-phone providers have a whole building and a floor for activities, featuring indoor soccer, table tennis, running track and concert hall.
- **Selgas Cano:** Madrid. This architecture firm has designed their building to blend into the Spanish forest.

Clickbait

ANDREW FIFIELD
andrew.fifield@metronews.ca

Most of us amateurs have strengthened our Instagram chops considerably since those heady early days of documenting pets, parks and undeserving food. But we still have a long way to go before catching up to these iPhone-slinging pros.

AikBeng Chia:
With iPhone in pocket, AikBeng Chia wanders the streets of Singapore to provide a series of all-hours glimpses of the city's people, art and architecture. @aikbengchia

Robert Paul Jansen:
A Dutch photographer who whiles away his spare hours by shooting the beautiful, frequently fog-shrouded Netherlands landscape. @robertpauljansen

Benedicte Guillon:
A Paris street photographer with an uncanny eye for capturing one of the world's most photogenic cities. Vacation vicariously in your pocket. @iphoneographic

Twitter

@metropicks asked: @Oprah is in trouble for backing skin cream derived from baby foreskins. What's your not-so-sketchy beauty secret?

@MisterInsight: I don't use any product, natural beauty is as fine as it comes

@jpadamson: Coconut oil as a hair conditioner and as a moisturizer. Smells great! Moisturizing! And you smell delicious!

Follow @metropicks and take part in our daily poll.

Letters

RE: Daredevil Raccoon Performs High-Wire Stunt, published April 9

I can have positivity with regards to raccoons. I'm positive they are a health hazard. I'm positive they are a pest. I'm positive there needs to be a raccoon control program.
Myworkisdonehere posted to metronews.ca

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU: Send us your comments: vancouverletters@metronews.ca

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SCENE

Better than Tabasco sauce

Live, and all the way from Mexico. Singer and social activist brings her show to Vancouver April 21

BACKSTAGE PASS
Graeme McRanor
vancouver@metronews.ca

Mexico's got plenty of colourful exports that most Canadians enjoy regularly, some all at once, like tequila, Tabasco sauce and sombreros, for example.

However, there's also some excellent stuff that, naturally, comes with way less regret.

The music of singer and social activist Lila Downs is one of those things, and she's bringing it to Vancouver on April 21 with a program that deftly combines traditional Mexican music with blues, jazz and soul.

"Lila Downs is a rare musician who has taken a very specific, very special cultural heritage and adapted it for world stages without sacrificing any authenticity," says co-managing director of the Chan Centre, Joyce Hinton.

"Even as it is rounded by blues, soul and pop influences, her Oaxacan heritage rings out through every note.

"Even more impressive, she has used her music as a platform to engage mass audiences in important social and political dialogue."

Downs' latest album, Pecados Y Milagros (Sins and Miracles), was influenced by Mexican votive paintings that give thanks for a miracle or favour received in that country.

Downs subsequently commissioned a votive painting for every track of the album, and they'll be projected throughout the concert.

Lila Downs performs Sunday, April 21 (7 p.m.) at the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts (at UBC). Tickets $36 to $72 via ticketmaster.ca.

For more information about the artist, visit liladowns.com.

Who knew vegetables were so ... dirty?

If you've even been curious about the sex lives of vegetables — and, really, who hasn't? — check out the aptly titled The Sex Lives of Vegetables ... And Other Delicious Distractions.

"What is it?" you ask. Well, good question. It is, according to advance publicity, an "enthralling, cheeky, multidisciplinary evening" that brings together Governor General Award-winning poet Lorna Crozier with musicians AK Coope, Rachel Kiyp and Heather Pawsey for a whimsical look at the inner-workings of a garden.

You'll get the dirt on the incestuous nature of the potato, and you might even get to run your hands up and down a nice pair of yams.

Astrolabe Musik Theatre presents The Sex Lives of Vegetables ... And Other Delicious Distractions April 20 at VanDusen Botanical Garden. Tickets $25 ($18 students and seniors) at sexlives.brownpapertickets.com. More information at astrolabmusiktheatre.com.

Singer Lila Downs performs at the Chan Centre on April 21. SUBMITTED

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Roger Ebert defended the indefensible

Reviewing his reviews. A look at the more controversial selections from the former film critic

MATT PRIGGE
Metro World News

Roger Ebert was the most famous film critic in the world, but he was also a film critic, which is to say fallible.

For all the classics he praised right out of the gate, or the ones he collected in his ever-swelling canon of The Great Movies, he got some wrong, or simply added to the dogpile on films, like Ishtar or Heaven's Gate, that could have used a powerful friend.

But it's easy — and smug — to admonish critics for missing the boat when one has 20/20 hindsight.

(And easier still to neglect that having a major player say Blue Velvet was crap actually enriched the discussion of the film by forcing its fans to better articulate their praises.)

But let's not dwell on his so-called failures, which ought not even to be called that.

In honour of his recent passing, let's look at several films that everyone — or almost everyone — either hated or treated with apathy except that guy at the Chicago Sun-Times who was on that show with the skinny guy.

Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia (1974)

Though it's today (mostly) acknowledged as one of Sam Peckinpah's masterpieces, his grimy, bad tequila-soaked, fly-ridden tale of a man (Warren Oates) who literally has to bring someone the head of a guy named Alfredo Garcia was once considered a legendary bomb.

Ebert was among the prescient, not to mention perceptive, calling it "some kind of bizarre masterpiece."

Dark City (1998)

No one else of note had spoken of it as highly as Ebert did, and the film bombed, but he stuck by his guns, affording it a second, even third life. Ebert even recorded a commentary track for the DVD and would tour around with it for special screenings.

Synecdoche, New York (2008)

Roger Ebert wasn't the only person to highly praise Charlie Kaufman's highly divisive directorial debut, but he was one of the few to almost put it on his all time top 10. He didn't but that's praise nonetheless.

Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome (1984)

To Ebert, who wrote trash cinema himself, it was just part of the business of loving movies. He afforded masterpiece status to the third in George Miller's Mad Max series, claiming that Thunderdome, the centerpiece arena, "is the first really original movie idea about how to stage a fight since we got the first karate movies."

Reflections in a Golden Eye (1967)

One of the first things he did, as a fresh-faced 25-year-old, was do what all critics ought to do: stand up for a movie that no one liked and whose studio was doing its best to suppress. John Huston's film was an on-simmer survey of a Southern army base, populated by a closeted major (Marlon Brando) and his jilting wife (Elizabeth Taylor).

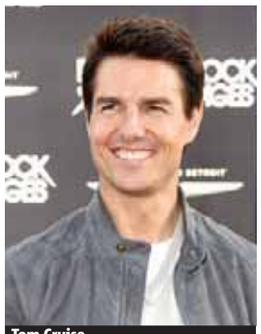
Ebert's review describes the hostile atmosphere at the screening and praised Brando's performance as his best in a period during which he flailed.

Tom Cruise admits to being caught off guard by divorce

Tom Cruise is finally opening up about his divorce from Katie Holmes, which caught most of Hollywood off guard. And it turns out it caught Cruise off guard as well.

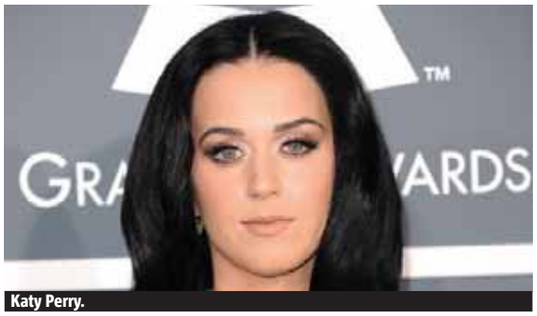
"I didn't expect it," he says in an interview with German TV station ProSieben.

"To be 50 and to have experiences and to think you have a grip on everything, and then it hits you — this is it, what life can do to you. Life is a tragicomedy. You need to have a sense of humour."



Tom Cruise.

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES



Katy Perry.

Perry ridding herself of Brand

Katy Perry is quickly unloading any remnants from her marriage to Russell Brand, including the Hollywood Hills home he bought in 2011 and then relinquished to her following their divorce, according to Us Weekly.

Perry is listing the seven-bedroom, 11-bath home for $6.925 million. It sits on a three-acre compound near the Chateau Marmont.

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

Gosling has kind words to say about Britney Spears

Growing up as co-stars on the Mickey Mouse Club made for some interesting run-ins between Ryan Gosling and Britney Spears — at least to hear Gosling tell it.

"Britney was a sweetheart," Gosling tells the U.K.'s Sunday Times magazine.

"She lived right above me, the girl next door. The little girl I used to play basketball and spin the bottle with."

Old pals

"She lived right above me, the girl next door. The little girl I used to play basketball and spin the bottle with."

Ryan Gosling
Talking about Britney Spears.

Their other Club-members included Justin Timberlake, Christina Aguilera and Keri Russell.

"I mean, sometimes you are at the same event, but it's a lot like I imagine what it's like to run into someone from elementary school," he says of how the old gang relates to each other now.

Twitter

@joelmchale
Last week my 5yr old walked out on our hotel balcony & repeatedly screamed GIVE ME MONEY. I thought "Wow, someday he will be a great leader"

@pattonoswalt
Sure, Diddy is dating @KateUpton. But did he win @esquiremag's Twitter War? Did he? DID HE?!? (Hugs crown, bursts into tears)

@SteveMartinToGo
When I was twelve, I wanted to launch a missile, too.

Lindsay Lohan.

Lohan pal looked to Liza to get the troubled star back on track

Lindsay Lohan was nearly given quite the talking to by Liza Minnelli late last year when the legendary singer was reportedly approached by a Lohan pal to stage an intervention, according to Radar Online.

Lohan's friend, Claus Hjelmbak, was the one who is said to have reached out to Minnelli.

"He was so concerned for her well-being because of her continued use of prescription pills and booze," a source says. "He reached out to Liza Minnelli's camp, in the hope that she could help. Liza has battled her own demons with alcohol and has been very supportive publicly of Lindsay. Claus thought that if anyone could get through to Lindsay, Liza could be that person."

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LAURA MVULA

British singer Laura Mvula sounds like Nina Simone and is being called the next Adele. She talks to us about her personal style.

'I'M AN EXPLORER'

KENYA HUNT
Metro World News in London

Laura Mvula's anthemic single, That's Alright, is a declaration against all of the unrealistic beauty standards promoted in magazines that make women second-guess themselves: "I will never be what you want and that's alright. Cause my skin ain't light and my body ain't tight. And that's alright."

So it's not surprising that the Brit who is often described as this generation's answer to Nina Simone would be equally secure in her sense of personal style.

As she prepares to go on tour in support of her new album, Sing to the Moon, she opens up about her natural hair, crush on Vivienne Westwood and weakness for big heels.

Styling around her natural hair

"My hair is very short, so it's important for me to feel soft and feminine. I like to think I'm a warm person. I like to soften my image as much as possible so that my short hair isn't overly strong or intimidating."

Her stage persona versus her off-duty one

"I think the two go alongside each other. Even things like being practical, which isn't my strongest point as a person. Sometimes I'm standing at a keyboard, and I want to wear my big heels. I love my big heels. But even though I might have a specific image and vision in my head, it also has to be comfortable for me to wear. I think what I wear will change as I work with bigger ensembles. At the moment simplicity is really important to me. I want to come off the stage feeling comfortable, like I've been able to move and not think about this wrap falling off my head or the length of my skirt."

On figuring out her look

"I'm an explorer. My dad used to say that I was always the kid in the wardrobe trying on ridiculous pieces together and thinking somehow that they would work. I think a lot about my style and my image, which is really important to me. Even though I do feel like a baby when it comes to fashion. I still feel very much at the beginning of it all."

Her ultimate fashion fantasy

"I dream about Vivienne Westwood. When I was getting married, I spent a lot of time dreaming about her dresses. But to have this kind of (professional) opportunity makes (her clothes) more attainable. I've worn some of her pieces before. They're so elegant, pretty and feminine."

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This designer eye stays Canadian

Shop the tried-and-true retailers that were born here

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

With the recent hoopla about new fashion and decor retailers invading Canada, I thought I'd pay homage to the home decor retailers who have been born and bred in this country.

I've always believed we have consistently been home to the best, and with a good style-eye, anyone can find attractive, on-trend home decor items for less than what others might expect.

The trick to an interesting decor is to mix various price points and styles that compliment each other. If you are looking for some well-priced accessories, here's a list of my favourite items from nationally available — and Canadian-born — retail and online stores.

EQ3

Born 12 years ago, the Winnipeg-based furniture manufacturer now has 11 stores in Canada and a comprehensive website that allows online shoppers to purchase affordable modern furnishings from coast to coast. Made in Canada upholstered furnishings are great quality and excellent value.

Matt Rocker, $599, eq3.com

Urban Barn

Founded by two high school friends 23 years ago, BC's born-and-bred home furnishings retailer boasts 41 locations and a comprehensive website. Trend-conscious shoppers can find amazingly priced furnishings and home accessories that change seasonally. Look for semi-custom furniture and carpets, trendsetting decorative objects and art. My favourite piece at the moment is a modern deco inspired bookcase that would act perfectly as a room divider as well.

Biblioteca Bookcase, $699, urbanbarn.com

Homesense

The domestic spin-off of discount fashion retailer Winners, Homesense boasts prices 20 to 60 per cent less than other retailers. With around 90 stores coast-to-coast, savvy home decor shoppers are sure to enjoy quality brands at discount prices. Homesense is my go-to for decorative pillows in designer styles, fabrics and fills (many have posh down/feather fills) that would cost five times the price elsewhere.

Designer-style pillows, from $14, homesense.ca

Simons

The esteemed family-owned retailer from Quebec has been in the fashion and housewares business for more than 170 years — it recently opened a new store in Edmonton. Canadians can even shop for their home decor online. Its bedding and tabletop linens always please me and Simons' imported lines are hard to find elsewhere. I am always impressed with the bedding: great quality, well priced and some very interesting designs.

New York Duvet Cover Set, from $130, simons.ca

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Over-dyed semi-antique patchwork rugs, from $200, ecarpetgallery.com

eCarpetGallery

Based in Montreal, this importer of new, vintage and antique rugs is known for its free shipping, fast delivery and exceptional pricing. Without a showroom and commissioned sales staff, this online business can offer the best prices in Canada. The rugs are imported, handmade and, in many cases, vintage, which makes them classics to collect and keep forever. Right now I am crazy for the over-dyed Persians and patchwork rugs that are a fraction of the cost of the high-end rug retailers.

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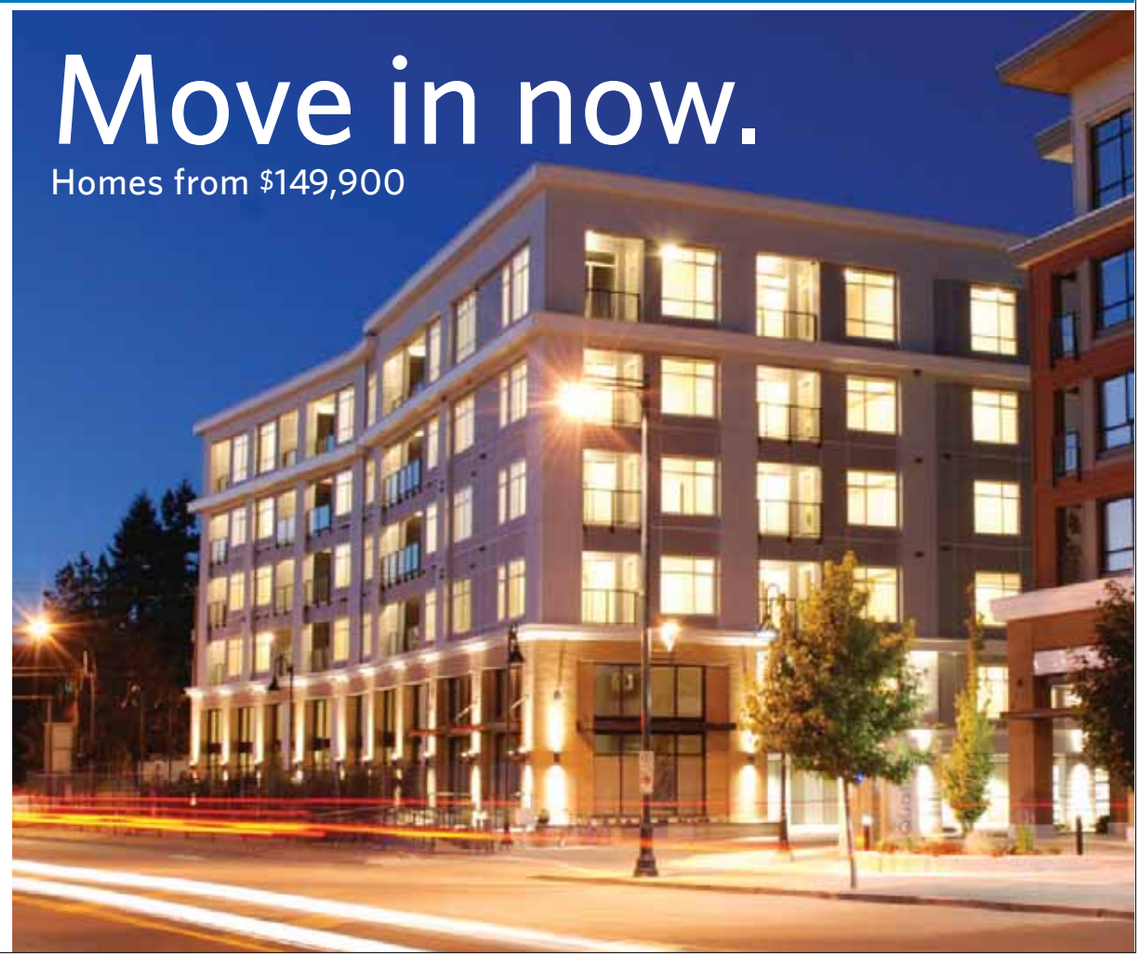

Curb appeal puts your home in big demand

Home. First impression is critical when setting the mood for prospective buyers

In a market where sellers are in competition to make the most out of their largest investment, improving your home's first impression is one of the best ways to set it apart from the rest of the pack.

When prospective buyers or renters drive through your neighbourhood, what do they see? This is a really important question that you need to answer because it will help understand what your buyer is going to be looking for in a new home.

Once you've answered this, ask yourself objectively if the front of your home is in keeping with the rest of the houses on your block. The first impression is critical in setting the mood for prospective agents and buyers.

If your home's exterior looks like it needs work, then people immediately assume that it's a fixer-upper. The opposite is true if your front yard is manicured, the roof is in good shape and the driveway is in good condition. Having a potential buyer walk into your front door in a positive mood can translate into big dollars for you.

Both Virginia Tech and the University of Guelph did studies in 2011 that measured the effect of landscaping on property values, and they both came to the same conclusion. To improve curb appeal, basic landscaping increased the home's value by five per cent, but more extensive landscaping, including decks and patios, increased the homes value up to 15 per cent.

So where do you spend the money?

Set your budget and be realistic about what you're trying to accomplish with it. Keep in mind that you are trying to create an excellent first impression to attract potential buyers. This isn't the opportunity for you to realize your landscaping dreams. Consider a new paint job using a colour scheme that highlights the character of your home. Install a new front door or at least update your door's hardware. Even something as simple as full and healthy planters can make a favourable impact.

One of the easiest ways to improve curb appeal is to have a clean and tidy front yard with a manicured lawn. Maybe this is the opportunity to invest in some new tools to help do the job properly. The best part about this type of investment is that not only will your plants and lawn look better with edging, pruning and cutting, you also get to take your new tools with you once you've sold your home.

The technology for landscaping tools has made the purchasing task much easier as well. Now you can get a hedge trimmer, string trimmer or sweeper & vac all in one system. With the Black & Decker 36V Lithium system, for example, you can use the same battery and charger for all three of those tools. A quick prune of the shrubs with the hedge trimmer, followed by a "one-around" with the string trimmer and then tidying up with the sweeper will help you to maintain the front yard in as little as 10 minutes per day.

The goal is to create an emotional connection at the first glance of any prospective buyer, so before you put that sign on the lawn, be sure to spend enough time at the curb.

NEWSCANADA

A clean and tidy yard is the best way to improve curb appeal. NEWSCANADA

When prospective buyers or renters drive through your neighbourhood, what do they see? NEWSCANADA

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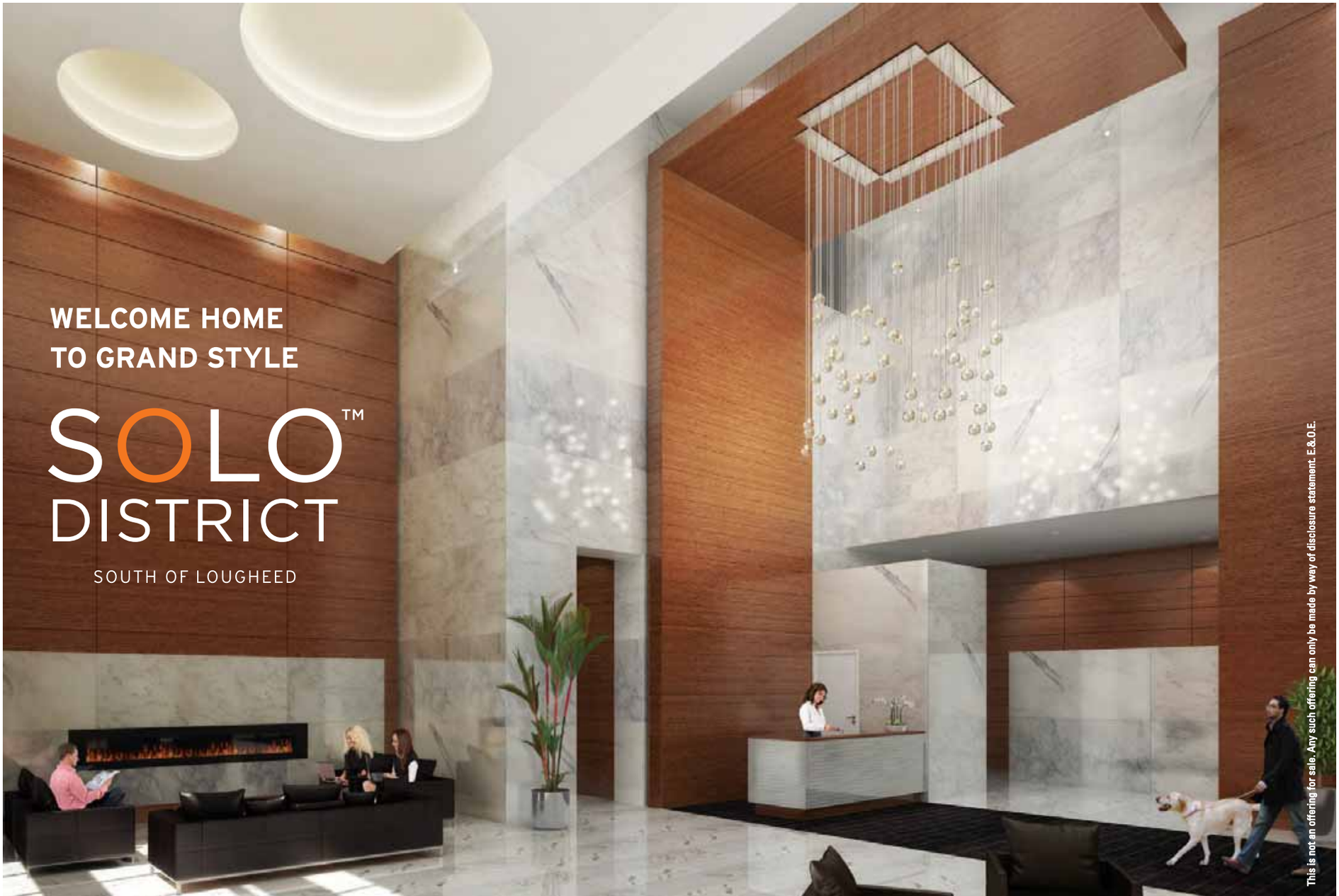
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From bland backyard to outdoor oasis

Summer setting.
Decor specialists share a few tips on making the most of your space this season

As winter-weary Canadians welcome the return of warmer weather, many won't have far to travel for the opportunity to revel in the outdoors.

Whether spending time solo or hosting a backyard bash, those with a deck, porch or patio at their disposal are keen to pass the time idling or entertaining in their outdoor space.

Decor specialists highlight a few ways homeowners can update their exteriors.

Colour change.
Some tend to gravitate toward the dark side when selecting hues for lounge chairs, chaises and sectional sofas. While brown and black-coloured weaves remain popular, look for an emergence of pieces featuring frames in paler shades.

"Some of the lighter weaves now — the whites, the light greys — it really sort of gives an airier, lighter feel," said Andrew Bockner, principal of Andrew Richard Designs in Toronto.

Fans of a more rustic look may eschew wicker or metal furnishings in favour of wood. Bockner has embraced use of reclaimed teak due to the hardwood's ability to withstand the elements.

"It can stand the test of time. It stays outside for years and basically it just turns a little grey, which is a beautiful colour for it, anyway."

Updating cushions in weather-resistant materials is another cost-effective method to dress up the backyard, said Heidi Richter, stylist on HGTV's Decked Out and Disaster Decks.

Made in the shade.
While some may choose to go light and bright with outdoor furniture, Bockner suggested selecting darker hues for overhead canopies to help mask the dirt and residue from the outdoors.

Larger cantilevered umbrellas also offer the benefit of protection without poles "interrupting your space," Bockner noted.

Injecting some added green with plants and foliage can lend some visual warmth as well as some added privacy.

"If you're in a smaller backyard and not worried about the trees so much, vertical planting is something that's really nice," said Richter.

Shine on.
There are many ways to keep your outdoor oasis illuminated well past sunset, and there's no need to settle on a sole source to brighten up your surroundings.

Richter said "layering the light" can help add depth and dimension to the space. If you bring in low-voltage LEDs on the stairs to the deck, consider also incorporating candlelight and lanterns, and perhaps some sconces flanking the door.

"It just adds a great ambience," she said. "If you're entertaining and it's fun and it's a lively party, you can even string up paper lanterns to add a little warmth and fun. "

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Stripes keep it simple in the Grace lounge set. All sets from Andrew Richards Designs. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HANDOUT/ANDREW RICHARDS DESIGNS

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The Alpine dining set brings palatial simplicity to the backyard. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HANDOUT/ANDREW RICHARDS DESIGNS

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Designer Kelly Wearstler's closet is a shoe-in when it comes to tidy, attractive organization. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/HL GROUP

These fashion tastemakers bring their sense of design to the home

Style and substance. Your wardrobe can inform the way you decorate your house — with accents and accessories

Does your outfit blend into the woodwork?

We're not talking in a boring, bland way, but in a complementary one. Perhaps your wardrobe is a reflection of your broader taste, and there's no place better to see that than in the way you decorate your home.

If you're true to your style from your clothing closet to the linen closet — and then the kitchen cabinets — you're probably not the type to bounce from trend to trend, style experts say. Instead, you probably have a strong point of view that evolves and is enhanced over time.

The home gives a picture window into your personal style because you live with it a lot longer and that tends to show off what you truly value, says jewelry designer Cathy Waterman. It's not glitz and glamour for her, for example; she likes craftsmanship with a dash of drama. Super-fancy sparkly jewels are hardly a part of her everyday routine, she says, but finely-made flatware is.

Here's a glimpse into tastemakers' closet connections:

Terron Schaefer, Saks Fifth Avenue chief creative officer

Terron Schaefer says anyone who knows him would expect the streamlined decor — and very neat closet — in his apartment.

There are many black-and-white photographs in black or stainless steel frames, and even though he is a collector of interesting objects such as Indonesian eating utensils and aerospace propellers, there is little clutter.

Schaefer, who also serves as a buyer on NBC's Fashion Star, admires beautiful shapes, and he wants to give them the chance to be noticed, so he doesn't have too many of anything nor does he switch things out too often,

"All my hangers are lined the same way, and all my shoes have shoe trees. ... I essentially wear a uniform of suits and shirts, and they're so similar that I can get dressed in the dark with confidence," he says.

But there's often the touch that gives Schaefer a conversation piece. For his outfit, it could be a bright pocket square or cool tie. In his dining area, it's the unfussy table — with bicycle wheels as legs.

Nanette Lepore, fashion designer

There is nothing precious about Lepore's home, she says. "I want the same thing from my house as I want for my collection. I like to make live-in clothes. I want to think of my clothes as go-to clothes, not special-occasion-only clothes."

She's a fan of prints and rich colours, and they're an important part of her decor just like her runway. The key are the accessories, whether it's shoes and a handbag, or a throw pillow and new sheets. "I think ... most people want to layer when they get dressed or when they decorate."

The catwalk trick she brings home with her? Good lighting.

Kelly Wearstler, decorator turned designer

"Whenever I work with clients that are uncertain about where or how to start in terms of home decor, I ask them to go into their closet and to describe to me what colour, style and textures they find. We build from there," says Wearstler.

Her own world is filled with mixed messages, and she likes it that way. In clothes, that means raw denim paired with beautiful, shiny jewelry. At home, it's "rough texture and raw art accented with the gleam of polished metals."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Got a disaster deck? These experts can help

DIY gone awry.
New TV show aims to show homeowners how to rebuild and beautify their "outdoor eyesores"

Dreams of an outdoor oasis can quickly dissolve for homeowners who tackle backyard builds without the skills and knowledge to do the job properly.

Home renovation show Disaster Decks profiles cases of DIY gone awry. But homeowners don't just get to show up for the big reveal — they're put to work.

Designer and carpenter Paul Lafrance takes on hosting duties on the new series, bringing along familiar faces from his HGTV Canada series Decked Out, including landscaper Jeff Sarty and stylist Heidi Richter.

"It's still fun," Richter said in an interview. "We've still got the whole gang with their jokes and all of the rest of it, but it's a little more of a tutorial.

"The homeowner is involved and what they are doing is teaching them how to rebuild the deck. It's generally people that built their own deck or they've inherited an old crappy deck from an old purchase. So we go in and help them."

Disaster Decks airs on Tuesdays at 10 p.m. ET on HGTV Canada. The first of two back-to-back episodes features Leo and Anne, whose lovely home is attached to an outdoor eyesore.

Anne yearns for a lounge area to host guests, but the dilapidated deck constructed by do-it-yourselfer Leo 25 years ago is hardly fit for entertaining with its rotting wood and exposed nails.

Lafrance and his team enlist Leo as they reconstruct the deck, while Richter steps in toward the end of the reno to bring in furniture and other decorative touches. She said a common thread among the decks gone wrong was really noticeable in the finishing.

"They would get things ... to a functional stage, but they were all looking a little rough around the edges. So they just need a little bit more help with that finishing just to tweak them and make it a more professional deck."

Rather than going over-the-top extravagant with the outdoor projects, Richter said the aim of Disaster Decks is to focus on more attainable ideas for the average homeowner.

"What we were trying to do is to find decks that already had good strong footings or support so there wasn't a whole lot of structural work to be done," she said. "We could use the framework and basically do re-decking, adding new details–railings, privacy screens and that sort of thing."

Have a vision

"The first step (to building a deck) is just deciding how you want to use your backyard."
Heidi Richter, stylist for Disaster Decks

For viewers inspired to have a new or revamped deck of their own to enjoy during warmer weather, don't reach for the tools — or your wallet — just yet. Richter said it's important for homeowners to determine how they're going to use their outdoor space and to have help to determine how their build will take shape.

"Do they want the beautiful built-in kitchen? Do they want just a small deck area? Do they want to do a deck or do they want to do a stone patio?" she asked. "If they have children, then they want to ensure that they have some space for them to run as well. So the first step is just deciding how you want to use your backyard." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Disaster Decks stylist Heidi Richter puts the finishing touches on a renovated deck. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Get decked out

When it comes to incorporating decorative details, Richter suggests going for personal and functional additions.

- "There's now lots of wonderful wall hangings that you can put in," she says. "There's Plexiglas that has bamboo embedded in it which allows the light to travel through, but also adds texture."
- Richter also suggests stitching together different pieces. "Mix and match the fabrics and furniture a little bit. It makes it a little more personal."

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FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS

Thursday, April 11, 2013

The desire to live in a place where there aren't as many maintenance chores is one of the key motivations for choosing a condo. JUPITERIMAGES/BRAND X PICTURES/THINKSTOCK

Low-maintenance living

Condominiums. Having fewer responsibilities makes housing arrangements easier for people

RICHARD WOODBURY
For Metro

Working as a real estate agent for the last 15 years, Joyce Richards has noticed that while there are different groups of people buying condos, there is a common thread between them. Whether it's the retiree looking to downsize or the young person who travels a lot, the desire to live in a place where there aren't as many maintenance chores is one of the key motivations for choosing a condo.

Having fewer responsibilities makes housing arrangements easier for people who travel or work out of town frequently.

"You just lock the door and go," says the Halifax-based real estate agent with Coldwell Banker Supercity Realty.

Another advantage of living in a condo is it allows people to live more centrally, thus allowing them to walk to work, be close to public transportation and the amenities of a downtown.

"People like to buy condos for the location," says Nic Blachette, a real estate agent with Sutton West Coast Realty in Vancouver.

There are, of course, downsides to condo living.

"I think some of the cons are people don't understand they are moving into a community," Richards says.

She says issues can pop up where people aren't respectful of their neighbours. Unlike living in one's own house, they have to be especially careful about the noise they create since condos will have different types of noise restrictions.

"You do have neighbours and they're a lot closer than when you had a house," Richards says.

Conflict between the owners at a condo building can also come about because of things like repairs to the units. While something like window replacements may not seem like a conflict generator on the surface, the fact owners may disagree on how much to spend on the replacements can create conflict, Blachette cautions.

Also, condos may not be an ideal fit for families as the amenities of a condo tend to be more geared towards adults, Richards says.

Before purchasing a condo, people need to make sure the building meshes well with their lifestyle.

"It's a good concept," Richards says. "It just has to meet your lifestyle."

Make a list of your basic needs to see if you can afford buying a home. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

Tips. Know what you can afford

More than ever before, first-time homebuyers are considering housing affordability.

"We want consumers to be comfortable with the financial responsibilities of owning a home, so it's important to determine what you can afford in order to maintain a reasonable lifestyle once you've made the leap," says Phil Soper, president of Royal LePage Canada.

To assess if you are ready for home ownership, Soper offers this guideline:

1 Determine your net worth. Take your assets (earnings, investments, savings, vehicles and other items you own) and subtract your liabilities (car loans, lines of credit, overdrafts and credit cards). A positive number is a good sign that you may be ready to purchase your first home.

2 Hire a real estate agent. Top agents have extensive experience and demonstrate dedication and commitment to helping their clients. Ask your family and friends for a referral, or explore real estate websites to read profiles on agents, including their areas of expertise and languages spoken. A real estate agent will have knowledge of accurate, real-time market data to leverage your negotiating position, as well as access to properties often even before they are listed.

3 Make a list of your basic needs. Is it important to you to be close to transit and amenities? Do you intend to grow your family or do you have a need for extra space? Determine the factors essential to you in a home and which ones you may be able to live without. This will help you narrow your search and choose a home that is within your financial means.

NEWS CANADA

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Tenant insurance. Give yourself peace of mind

So, you have found your ideal apartment — a two-bedroom basement paradise or a mid-town penthouse or a fantastic south-facing one-bedroom condo. Now it's time to move in right away, right? Sure, start packing, but make sure you also budget for tenant insurance

Perhaps you think you don't need it because you are only renting and you don't own any fancy stuff. But what if something happened — would you have enough set aside to replace all your belongings and to find temporary housing? If you said no, Pina Ferraro-Novello, a corporate underwriter with Desjardins General Insurance Group, would like you to re-consider.

"Tenant insurance is necessary because it protects your property and also covers you in the event that you accidentally cause damage to the property of others," Ferraro-Novello says. "For example, if your bathtub overflowed and flooded the apartment below, destroying your neighbour's property, tenant insurance would protect you. Luckily, it's a simple and affordable coverage. Also, if you're a student, your parents' policy might automatically extend coverage to you at school."

What's typically covered by tenant insurance?

This type of insurance protects you from damage, like fire, theft, certain water damage and vandalism. If your apartment is seriously damaged as a result of an insured loss, tenant insurance would also typically cover your additional living expenses while it's being repaired. Tenant insurance also provides liability coverage if someone gets hurt because of your negligence, like slipping and falling on a wet floor in your apartment, for example.

How much coverage do you need?

The total cost of tenant's insurance will depend largely on the value of your contents. Most renters tend to underestimate what it would cost to replace their belongings. It's smart to take an inventory, including photos, which only takes a few minutes and will make things a lot easier if you experience a loss.

Start by walking from room to room and itemize all the contents.

NEWS CANADA

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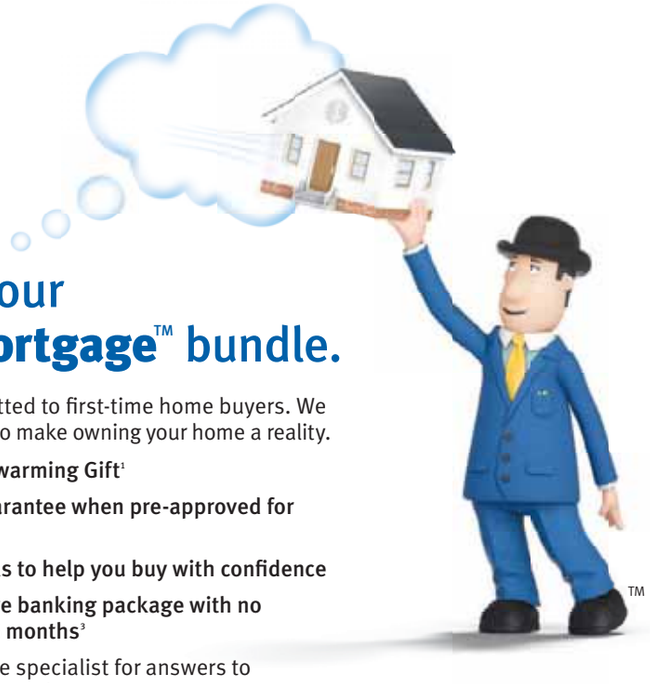

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Before purchasing, research the pros and cons to buying a new condo versus a resale one. PHOTOS.COM/THINKSTOCK

New or used: Which is best suited for you?

RICHARD WOODBURY
For Metro

Newer isn't always better. That's the bottom line when it comes to purchasing a condo since there are many pros and cons to buying a new condo versus a resale one.

Perhaps the biggest advantage to buying a new condo is it will likely be more modern in style.

"You're getting a new product with today's features and finishes," says Josh Nelson, a real estate agent with Royal LePage Foothills in Calgary.

This will also likely include a warranty.

As well, buyers will be able to make the unit more their own by selecting finishes and upgrades.

The condo fees may be lower in a new building, but that isn't necessarily a good thing.

"That's also a big negative in my opinion, in that most of the developers … set these condo fees too low," Nelson says.

Nelson says it takes somewhere between three and five years for a new condo to get a good idea of how it should be spending its money. He says if the condo fees haven't gone up after five years, they will likely go up substantially very soon.

Another downside to a new condo can be that people are often purchasing it when it is nothing more than plans on a piece of paper.

"A plan is a plan and a finished product could be completely different," says Clair Whittington, a broker with MaxWell Altima Realty in Regina.

This is in contrast to a resale condo.

"You know what the finished product is," Whittington says.

Having a finished product with a track record can also provide people with some reassurance.

"You may find a little bit more security in a resale building in that you have been seeing what it has been doing in its past and you can get an idea of where it will be in the future," Nelson says.

RICHARD WOODBURY

Easing the stress of moving.

Moving day is near; stress levels are up. You're surrounded by boxes, you're running out of packing tape, and your list of tasks seems to be getting longer. Plus, you still have to make dinner. But as you slice, stir and season, you can't shake that nagging feeling that you've missed something: Have I confirmed the movers? Have I set up the new hydro account? Have I booked time off work? And then there's the mail. Have I notified everyone I need to about my change of address?

Plus, with identity theft on the rise, the Change of Address service helps keep your personal information safe by making sure it stays in your hands.

Also, if you schedule your address change 30 days in advance, you will have a chance to win $1,500*. So take the headache out of moving with Canada Post's Change of Address service. It's easy, it's safe – and it gives you a chance to win $1,500.

Research consistently shows that moving is one of the most stressful of life events.

Stress feeds not just on the act of moving, but on all those annoying tasks that need to get done before the big day. So it's no wonder that movers flock to services that can lessen their load – like the Change of Address service offered by Canada Post. With the Change of Address service, Canada Post forwards all your mail to your new address. You can sign up online, and you can schedule when your service will take effect. One reason movers like this service: peace of mind. You don't have to worry about whether you've notified all the necessary companies, government agencies, friends and family about your new address before you move. You can take your time and do it when it's more convenient. Meanwhile, you'll still receive the mail that's been sent to your old address.

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***No purchase necessary.** Contest runs from 12:00:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time ("EDT") on April 8, 2013 and ends on 11:59:59 p.m. EDT October 31, 2013. Contest is open to individuals who reside in Canada, are over the age of majority in their province or territory of residence, are not employees of Canada Post or Promotion Solutions, and who purchase Canada Post's residential permanent change of address service at least 30 days in advance of their move date. One prize with a value of $1,500.00 (CDN) is available to be won in each of seven prize periods (approx. 30-day period) during the contest. Odds of being selected depend on the total number of eligible entries received. Selected entrants must answer a mathematical skill-testing question and sign a release. Full contest rules are available at **canadapost.ca/makeyourmove.**

Condos can consist of many different styles of buildings and layouts so choose the one that suits your lifestyle. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

There's a style for everyone

RICHARD WOODBURY
For Metro

While condos often bring to mind thoughts of units in a highrise building, the reality is they can consist of many different styles of buildings, such as townhouses and single-detached houses.

Regardless of the type, it is important people find out what exactly they own before purchasing a condo.

"It's always more advisable to get legal counsel prior to doing anything because there are consequences — both financial and otherwise — to signing agreements," says Sylvan Schneider, the president of Schneider Attorney Inc. in Montreal.

This is especially true given that no two condos are exactly like.

In most cases, "you basically own everything that's in the unit and then you have a share in everything that's outside of the unit," says Rosellina Giardino, a real estate lawyer with Giardino Law in Edmonton.

The items that would fall outside of the unit (and thus qualify as a common element) would be things like the hallways, any amenity rooms and the building's mechanical systems. As well, it's important to look into whether extras such as parking spaces or storage are included as part of the deal.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) cautions that while these may be for the exclusive use of a unit owner, there may be conditions attached to using them.

"While these spaces are exclusive to your use, there may be restrictions on how and when you use them," says the CMHC's Condominium Buyers' Guide.

While ownership in most condos consists of owning the unit and having a share in the common elements, it isn't always that way.

In the case of freehold condominiums (also known as a bare/vacant land condominium), "the unit may be the entire house including the exterior walls, the roof and, in some cases, the land surrounding the structure," CMHC says.

The CMHC also says the maintenance of these outside elements may be the responsibility of the condo corporation or the unit owner.

To bring clarity to just what one owns and who is responsible for maintenance, it is crucial to get sound advice.

"It's really important to talk to a lawyer," says Giardino.

Find out exactly what you own before buying a condo. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

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Compact condos can appear roomy with space-saving furniture and clever storage solutions. PHOTOS.COM/THINKSTOCK

Wait until you move to see what possessions work in a new space and which ones don't. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

Decorating for smaller spaces

TRACY HANES
For Metro

One of the challenges of moving to a condo is adapting to living in a relatively small space. But even compact condos can appear roomy with space-saving furniture, clever storage solutions and decorating tricks.

Interior decorator Mary Bannet of Just the Thing Interiors (justthethinginteriors.com) says the first order of business is to edit belongings. Some clients may want to wait until they move to see what possessions work in the new space and which ones have to go, she says.

She says buyers shouldn't feel compelled to follow a condo floor plan.

"Just because the plan says a space is a dining room doesn't mean you have to use it as a dining room."

Multi-functional furniture is ideal for condos, she says.

"Multi-functional pieces make good use of space and you might want to look a console table that may also be used as a desk, laptop trays that fit over a sofa arm or coffee tables that can be converted into dining tables," she suggests.

Bannet says Resource Furniture (resourcefurniture.com) is a good source for ideas and specializes in space-saving pieces.

A bed that folds into a wall is an excellent way to accommodate overnight guests without taking up valuable space on a daily basis, Bannet says.

Built-ins that provide storage are must-haves. "You need to think about making use of vertical space and use of the height of the walls rather than floor space. You could put built-in storage around a wall-mounted TV and store bedding above it and board games below it."

In kitchens, bulkheads may have nothing but empty space behind them and may be converted to storage. Or a kitchen wall may be turned into an island or peninsula with a breakfast bar.

To make spaces feel larger, keep to a monochromatic colour scheme, says Bannet. Many people believe that they have to stick to light paint colours to make a space appear larger, but that's not the case.

"You want to minimize contrast," she says. "Contrast makes a space look full. If you like dark colours and drama, there's nothing wrong with having those in a small space. If you keep everything in the room in dark tones, it will feel larger. If you have light coloured pieces, keep to light coloured walls."

Bannet says mirrors are great space enhancers as accent pieces or mounted on entire walls. Glass, mirrored and lacquered furniture pieces also boost the feeling of space.

"If your walls are in good enough shape, you might want to use high gloss paint as it gives a rich, luxurious and airy feel," Bannet says.

People often put a small, light-coloured rug under a coffee table or other piece of furniture, which makes the room look smaller. Bannet says it's better to have a larger rug that goes almost to the wall and anchors the seating area, making it seem larger and defining it as a separate room.

Window treatments "shouldn't jump out at you" and roller shades or shades that go into casings are great to capitalize on views.

Sheers are also a good solution and should blend with the wall colour.

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Canadian maple syrup helps to create a crispy wok winner

GAV MARTELL
Yummymummyclub.ca

Rather than using sugar, this dish calls for some Canadian maple syrup for sweetness. The sweetness contrasted with the zip of the red wine vinegar makes this Crispy Maple Beef a morsel by morsel mouth-pleasing winner.

1. Mix the beef, baking soda, and 3 tablespoons of water in a medium bowl. Cover, and refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight (the baking soda will tenderize steak).

2. To make the sauce, mix the syrup, vinegar, soy sauce and cornstarch in a small bowl. Set aside.

3. Heat a wok over high heat. Add enough vegetable oil to come about 1 1/2 inches up the sides of the wok, and heat to 375 degrees F. Meanwhile, add the cornstarch and egg white to the beef, and mix well to coat.

4. Cook the beef one small batch at a time (about 1/2 cup) so that it does not bring the temperature of the oil too low. Stir gently until it begins to look crispy, about 1 minute. Using a wire mesh strainer, transfer the beef to a colander to drain. Remove any fried bits from the wok.

5. Return the beef to the wok, and fry again until crispy all over, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a strainer to drain. Discard all but 1 tablespoon of oil from the wok.

6. Return the wok to high heat. Add the beef, sauce mixture and sesame oil. Stir-fry until all of the ingredients are well blended, about 30 seconds. Serve immediately over steamed rice.

This recipe serves four to six. GAV MARTELL OF YUMMYMUMMYCLUB.CA

YUMMYMUMMYCLUB.CA IS AN ONLINE RESOURCE TO HELP WOMEN SURVIVE MOTHERHOOD.

Ingredients

- 1 lb stir-fry beef
- 1 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 3 tbsp water
- Vegetable oil
- 1 cup cornstarch
- 1 large egg white, lightly beaten
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 3 cups prepared white rice

Sauce

- 4 tbsp maple syrup
- 4 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp cornstarch

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Kind of Carpaccio

Carpaccio is an Italian dish of thinly sliced and lightly seasoned raw steak. This recipe preserves the essence of carpaccio, but adds both the texture and taste of a light sear to the exterior

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup mirin
- Kosher salt and pepper
- Two 6-oz bison steaks
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges

1. In bowl, whisk mirin, 1 tsp salt and 1 tsp pepper. Add steaks, turning to coat; refrigerate at least 20 minutes.

2. When ready to cook, in skillet over medium-high, heat oil until very hot but not smoking. Add steaks and sear on each side 1 1/2 mins. Transfer to a platter and let rest 5 mins.

3. Thinly slice across grain. Fan slices onto 2 serving plates; season with salt and pepper. Squeeze 2 lemon wedges over each. Serve.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

For your phone

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
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Swirl It! (iPhone; free)

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CFL

B.C. Lions mini-camp set to begin next week

The B.C. Lions will hold a three-day mini-camp for the offence at the club's Surrey practice facility, beginning Tuesday.

Twenty players will attend, including 10 receivers, three running backs, one fullback, four quarterbacks and centres Angus Reid and his Adam Baboulas.

Rudy Carpenter, who the Lions signed to a contract in a deal announced Tuesday and will be entering his first CFL season, will be among the four QBs at camp.

The camp comes three weeks before the CFL Canadian draft on May 6. Training camp begins June 2 in Kamloops. **METRO**

CFL

More video review a 'natural evolution'

The CFL's board of governors has approved a rule allowing coaches to request video review of a missed field goal or convert to possibly overturn an on-field ruling.

"Video review has become a dependable asset to ensure we get the right call on the field," Tom Higgins, the CFL's director of officiating, said in a statement. "Expanding video review to cover these potential scoring plays is a natural evolution."

Coaches will also now be able to use both of their timeouts any time during regulation time but only one after the three-minute warning in the second half.

Previously, coaches could only use one timeout per half. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Calgary Flames goaltender Miikka Kiprusoff turns aside a shot in front of Alex Burrows of the Vancouver Canucks in Calgary on Wednesday night. Burrows scored a goal and the Canucks won 4-1. DEREK LEUNG/GETTY IMAGES

Luongo, Canucks snuff out Flames

NHL. Veteran goalie steps in for ill Schneider and makes 40 saves

On Wednesday

Canucks	Flames
4	1

Maxim Lapierre scored the go-ahead goal and Roberto Luongo, in a surprise start, made 40 saves as the Vancouver Canucks beat the Calgary Flames 4-1 on Wednesday night.

Andrew Ebbett centred a pass that Lapierre swatted behind Miikka Kiprusoff from the top of the crease, breaking a 1-1 tie at 12:37 of the third period.

Up until that goal, most of the play in the third had been in the Vancouver end where Luongo was sharp in turning aside dangerous chance after chance.

Calgary outshot the Canucks 41-29 in the game including 18-9 in the final 20 minutes.

Alex Burrows, Mason Raymond and Daniel Sedin also scored for Vancouver (23-11-6), winners of nine of its last 12. The Canucks, who began a five-game road trip, opened up a six-point lead atop the Northwest Division over the Minnesota Wild. They will also make stops in Colorado, Nashville, St. Louis and Dallas.

Curtis Glencross with his team-leading 15th had the lone goal for Calgary (14-21-4), which has lost six of its last seven. The Flames remain tied with the Florida Panthers for second-last overall. They both entered the night three points up on the Avalanche, who were playing the Anaheim Ducks.

Cory Schneider was supposed to get the start for Vancouver but fell ill, so the Canucks turned to Luongo who started for the first time in 12 games. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Tiger spends Masters practice in woods

The first tee shot clattered through a pair of pines on the left side of the 13th fairway, finally landing on the wrong side of Rae's Creek. Tiger Woods tried again, and this wasn't any better. Fans peered across the fairway and only heard the ball rifle through some bushes.

"He's hitting another one," a man announced from the gallery.

The third shot with a fairway metal caused them to retreat until it turned with a slight draw, clipping a pine branch and settling in the second cut of rough.

Woods played nine holes Wednesday morning in his final tuneup for the Masters, and how he played was of little consequence. Even so, that snapshot from the 13th tee was another reminder how quickly the best plans can fall apart, even for the No. 1 player on top of his game, especially at Augusta National in Georgia.

Quoted

"It's always a challenge those first five or six holes, when you haven't been in competition, to be really mentally focused and sharp."

Phil Mickelson, who said Wednesday that he has butterflies ahead of the Masters. Mickelson hasn't played since the Houston Open during the last weekend of March.

When the Masters begins Thursday, Woods is the odds-on favourite to end his five-year drought in the majors and win a green jacket for the first time since 2005.

Trouble is, Augusta National doesn't play favourites.

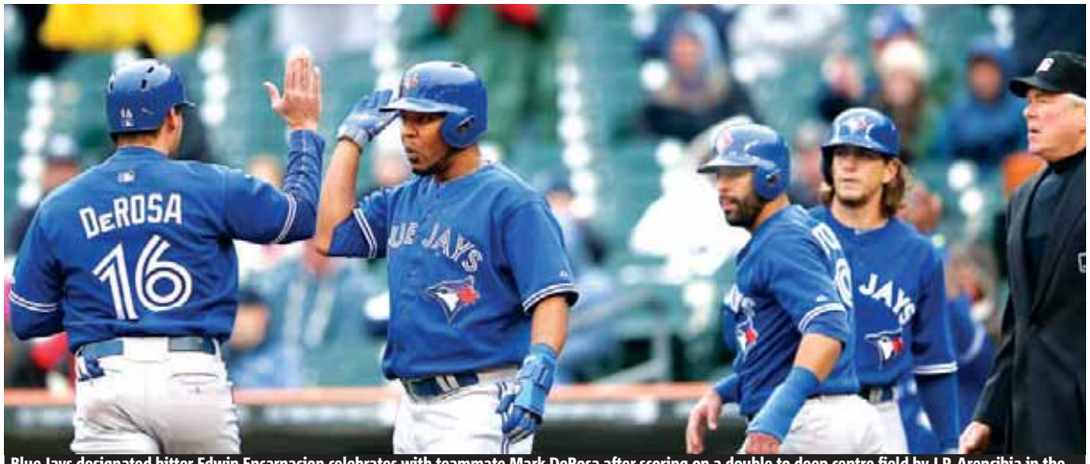
"Obviously, Tiger is Tiger," said Scott Piercy, who will play alongside Woods and Luke Donald in the opening two rounds. "He's always going to be that target. He knows it, and that's how he wants it. But there's a lot of people getting closer." **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Tiger Woods GETTY IMAGES

4 SPORTS

No longer idle in Motor City

MLB. Blue Jays rally past Tigers in sixth and seventh to improve record to 3-5


Blue Jays designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion celebrates with teammate Mark DeRosa after scoring on a double to deep centre field by J.P. Arencibia in the seventh inning of Toronto's 8-6 win over the Tigers on Wednesday in Detroit. LEON HALIP/GETTY IMAGES

J.P. Arencibia and Mark DeRosa gave the struggling Toronto Blue Jays a chance to feel good.

Arencibia hit a three-run double in the seventh inning and the Blue Jays rallied from a five-run deficit to beat the Detroit Tigers 8-6 on Wednesday.

Toronto had opened a season of high expectations with five losses in seven games.

"No reason to panic, but when you see it slipping away in the fifth or sixth inning, it was nice for the bats to come alive," said DeRosa, whose pinch-hit double in the sixth got the comeback started in earnest. "We obviously didn't get off to the start we wanted to, but we fought."

Detroit led 6-1 in the sixth, but starter Rick Porcello allowed hits to the first three batters that inning. They all eventually scored, and Toronto added four more runs the following inning.

Bryan Villarreal (0-1) came on with one on and one out in the seventh and proceeded to walk three straight hitters, forcing in a run. Arencibia followed with a drive to the gap in left-centre off Octavio Dotel to make it 8-6.

"It was nice to finally get a few hits and walks and guys grinding out at-bats, and string it all in the same inning," Arencibia said. "To score, you need to be able to do that collectively in an inning."

Aaron Loup (1-0) pitched a scoreless sixth for the Blue Jays. Casey Janssen, the last of five Toronto relievers, pitched a perfect ninth for his second save.

Jays starter Mark Buehrle allowed six runs — five earned — in 4 1/3 innings.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

By the numbers

0-19

Blue Jays designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion snapped an 0-for-19 skid by doubling in the fourth and sixth innings.

Reason to believe

The Jays' start has been uneven, to say the least, but there are plenty of teams that have converted bad starts into post-season finishes.

- **2008 Tampa Bay Rays.** Opened April with a 7-10 record but rebounded with a 15-12 month. Went on to win their division and the American League pennant.
- **2006 Minnesota Twins.** 1-5 to start, 9-15 in April, and 25-33 on June 7 before winning 44 of their next 52 to glide into the post-season.
- **2002 Anaheim Angels.** Won the World Series after a 2-5 start in April. They were 9-11 in April before things turned around.
- **2001 Oakland Athletics.** Went 8-17 to start, then 96-43 the rest of the way.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You need to clear your mind of trivial thoughts and focus only on what really matters, with your career very much to the fore. The rest of the world can waste time on non-essentials.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
According to the planets, someone is abusing your good nature and you must get tough to make sure they stop. Just because you're a nice guy does not mean you're not allowed to get nasty once in a while.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
There is something you need to take care of that cannot be delegated to other people. You may not enjoy it that much but you know it must be done. Get it over with now and the good times will soon begin.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Yes, someone has betrayed your trust, but is it really such a big deal? Why not just forget about it and move on? If nothing else, others will realize you are not thin-skinned.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
A little bit of effort will go a long way today but don't push too hard. Pace yourself according to your natural limits. Small victories will soon add up to major triumphs.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
If you give up one thing today, you will gain something much more valuable in the long-term. But do you have the willpower to make the change? If you don't make it now, it may never be made.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Try not to take what you hear today the wrong way. What you think is bad news may be nothing of the sort. You could just be creating an interpretation that doesn't exist.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Other people seem unable to grasp even the most simple of instructions today, which is so frustrating. There is no point losing your temper as that will only make matters worse.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Before you agree to new responsibilities, you should ask yourself how they might affect other areas of your life. Cash flow situation isn't everything. Time has value too.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
No matter how tempting a social invitation may be, you must turn it down and do something less demanding. There are times when you like to be alone with your thoughts and this is one of them.

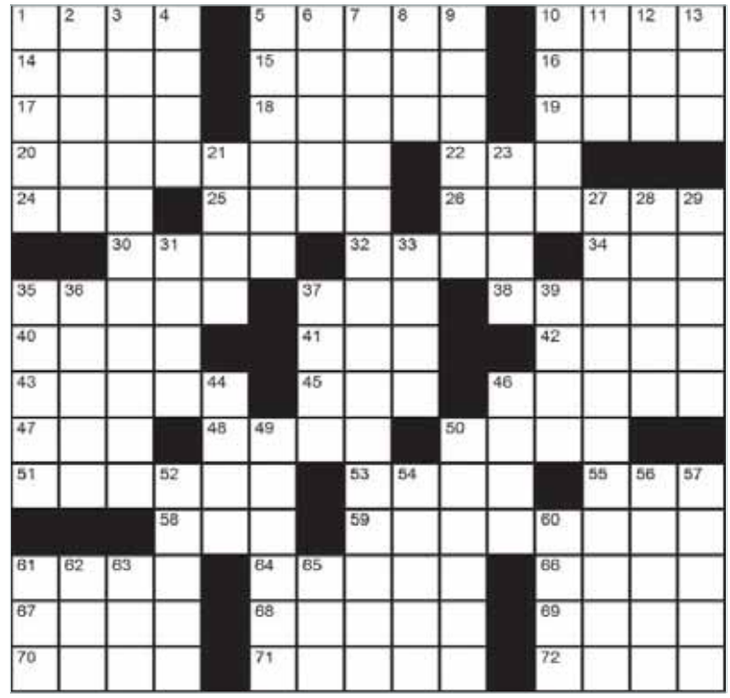
♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Something you hear while listening in on someone else's conversation will intrigue you and make you want to know more, but you've got to be smart about it. You don't want them to know you're a snoop.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Some people have no shame and you will find yourself having to deal with one such individual today. Don't waste time trying to befriend them. Morally you are on different planets. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

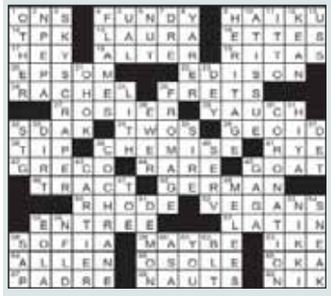
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Cod-like fish
5. Ancient insect trapping/preserving stuff
10. Halifax-born singer, Holly __
14. Belgian imaging corporation
15. Glass: French
16. Singer Mr. Redding
17. Pea: French
18. "Should _ __ the doorbell?"
19. __ and potatoes
20. Type of painting
22. 'Smarter Planet' sloganeer
24. Metres' li'l opposites
25. __-inflammatory
26. BC river
30. Not that
32. The Ramayana heroine
34. 'Gran' add-on (Hiker's treat)
35. Hairy, like a lion
37. Very smart letters
38. Witch assembly
40. Culture medium
41. Wood sorrel
42. Hollywood great Gregory
43. Quick movie appearance
45. Hi's opposites
46. Breath mints brand
47. 'Oct' add-on (Music†interval)
48. Think over
50. Month
51. Canadian bakery since 1882
53. Unwritten
55. Post-op locale
58. "Impressive!"
59.Canadian actress Kate
61. __-Levesque (Boulevard in Montreal)
64. Chilliwack song: "__-_"
66. Juniors = Jnrs/ Seniors = ?
67. Idea: French
68. Take _ __ breath
69. "Let __" by The Beatles: 2 wds.
70. Atmosphere
71. Actress, Parker __
72. Way [abbr.]

Down
1. Labrador community, __ Valley-Goose Bay
2. "Have _ __ time!" (Enjoy!)
3. What The Kardashians mostly have, "_-_ __ __
4. "__ of Eden" (1955)
5. Birds
6. Warrant
7. What were Upper Canada and Lower Canada?: 2 wds.
8. 'West' suffix
9. Get-then-give the present
10. This thing: ,
11. 'Capri' suffix
12. __ Fail (Irish coronation stone)
13. The bar on "Cheers", __. 1895
21. Bug killer brand
23. Bric-a-__
27. Parti Quebecois concern
28. Pick a politician
29. Colonel and Lieutenant
31. Not there
33. Varieties of apples
35. Parrot
36. Tequila plant source
37. Opinion __
39. Unlock
44. 1847 Herman Melville story
46. Select/reject
49. Open a package
50. Clunker car
52. Shannon __ (Canadian wife of rocker Gene Simmons)
54. Ms. Zellweger
56. Breads and pasta, e.g.
57. Not yet established
60. Egyptian Myth: Daughter of Geb
61. Coffee mug part
62. Tokyo, formerly
63. Prefix to 'lithic'
65. Ruckus

Yesterday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

	2						8	
	9	4		7		6	3	
6			1		9			5
		5	2		4	3		
		9	6		7	5		
4			8		6			9
	3	1		5		8	6	
	5						7	

Yesterday's Sudoku

3	6	9	8	2	5	1	4	7
8	1	7	6	4	9	2	3	5
4	5	2	3	1	7	6	9	8
5	7	4	2	6	3	9	8	1
9	3	6	1	7	8	4	5	2
1	2	8	9	5	4	3	7	6
2	9	3	7	8	1	5	6	4
7	4	1	5	3	6	8	2	9
6	8	5	4	9	2	7	1	3

Today
13°/7°
Mainly sunny

Friday
10°/7°
Rain
90%

Know what the weather will be 14 days from now.
Check the 14 day trend.
TWN incorporates MSC data

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1855 Burrard St.
2338 Cambie St.
2372 West 4th Ave.
2748 Rupert St.
2749 Main St.
3121 West Broadway

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Fraserway Place
Sevenoaks Shopping Centre
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2142 Clearbrook Rd.
2602 Mt. Lehman Rd.
32915 South Fraser Way

Aldergrove
26310 Fraser Hwy.

Burnaby
Brentwood Mall
Crystal Square
Lougheed Mall
Metropolis at Metrotown
3855 Henning Dr.
4501 North Rd.
4711 Kingsway

Chilliwack
Cottonwood Mall
Eagle Landing Shopping Centre
7544 Vedder Rd.
45300 Luckakuck Way

Coquitlam
Coquitlam Centre
1071 Austin Ave.
2988 Glen Dr.
3000 Lougheed Hwy.
3278 Westwood St.

Delta
Scottsdale Centre
1517 56th St.
4841 Delta St.
4912 62nd St.
7235 120th St.

Langley
Willowbrook Mall
8840 210th St.
19638 Fraser Hwy.
19700 Langley Bypass
20159 88th Ave.
20202 66th Ave.

Maple Ridge
Haney Place Mall
22661 Lougheed Hwy.

Mission
Junction Shopping Centre
32670 Lougheed Hwy.

New Westminster
Royal City Centre

North Vancouver
Capilano Mall
Lynn Valley Centre
1295 Marine Dr.
1392 Main St.
1801 Lonsdale Ave.

Pitt Meadows
19800 Lougheed Hwy.

Richmond
Admiralty Centre Mall
Lansdowne Mall
Richmond Centre

Surrey
Central City Mall
Cloverdale Crossing
Grandview Corners
Guildford Town Centre
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7380 King George Blvd.
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